



THE  
HISTORY  
OF  
Miss SOPHIA FANBROOK.

VOL. II.





THE  
CONFLICT:  
OR, THE  
HISTORY

OF

MISS SOPHIA FANBROOK.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

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V O L. II.

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L O N D O N :

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MDCCLXVII.

T H T

CONFLICT:

WISDOM



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THE  
HISTORY  
OF  
Miss SOPHIA FANBROOK.

BOOK IV.

**M**RS. Romney coming into the room at this critical juncture, found them in attitudes more tender than she had ever seen them in before; for Sir William, upon letting go Sophia's hand, had thrown his arm round her, and pressing her to his bosom, she, to conceal her blushes and her

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tears,

tears, had let her face fall upon his shoulder, in which situation she gave a full vent to the effusions of nature : effusions which she could not suppress, on comparing her present with her former condition. At the entrance of Mrs. Romney she started, recollecting the posture she was in, and imagining one of the servants might have surprized her; and the affectionate Sir William, reading her thoughts in her eyes, cried out, ‘ Come, my dear aunt, and be witness to the excessive transport which  
‘ this dear lovely girl has been giving  
‘ me, by assuring me that I have the  
‘ second place in her heart. O ! I want  
‘ words to convey my sensations ; they  
‘ are exquisite—beyond all description !  
‘ Never surely, no, never was there such  
‘ an angelic creature !’

‘ I sincerely rejoice at your happiness,  
‘ Sir William, said Mrs. Romney, and  
‘ as affectionately bestow my thanks on  
‘ my dear Sophia, for so kindly relieving the anxiety you have so long laboured under. May you be one day  
‘ happy

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‘ happy together, and may those vir-  
‘ tues, Sir William, which I now believe  
‘ you possessed of, and the discovery  
‘ of which is entirely owing to your  
‘ esteem for this dear amiable girl, in-  
‘ crease every hour to complete your  
‘ felicity.’

‘ My dear madam, replied he, I  
‘ thank you extremely for the just dis-  
‘ tinctions you have made. I do, in-  
‘ deed, owe every thing to my dear  
‘ Sophia (looking at her with eyes full  
‘ of love and tenderness).’

Though Sophia had been so apprehensive that Dormer should imagine, from Sir William’s exclamation before-mentioned, he was highly in her favour, she had been unnecessarily so, for Dormer luckily did not hear it. But as she had always behaved with the utmost propriety, and appeared with the greatest unconcern about him, he admired her the more for the dignity of her carriage (being justly of opinion, that a young woman by nothing more disco-

vers her want of sense and modesty, than by shewing a particular regard for a man, till she is assured that he really loves her, and that his designs are honourable) and told his sister, after he had very much launched out in her praise, that if she thought Miss Fanbrook was disengaged, he did not know a woman in the world so agreeable to him.

Miss Dormer had heard Sir William's apostrophe, but giving it a favourable turn when she mentioned it to her brother, told him that she fancied Sir William liked Miss Fanbrook, and was jealous of him.

This conjecture of his sister's encouraged Dormer to make his proposals, instead of checking his advances: but thinking that it would be proper to consult Mrs. Romney, who had, he found, the most inviolable friendship for Miss Fanbrook, before he proceeded; he waited on that lady one morning,  
and

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and begged the favour of speaking to her.

As Sophia was practising a lesson upon the organ, while Sir William lolled upon her back of the chair, giving her a few instructions, Mrs. Romney quitted them, on hearing Mr. Dormer's name announced, to receive him in private, in the next parlour.

After a few apologies, Mr. Dormer declared his admiration of her fair friend, and earnestly intreated to know if her heart was engaged,

Mrs. Romney, after a moment's hesitation, said with a smile, 'The situation of young ladies hearts, Mr. Dormer, is often so critical, that I cannot take upon me to answer for Miss Fanbrook's, though we are upon the most friendly terms imaginable; but I will send the lady herself to you.'

He bowed, and said, he should think himself much honoured by a visit from her.

Mrs. Romney then desired Sophia to go to Mr. Dormer: 'he wants to speak with you, my dear,' said she.

'Me, madam! cried Sophia amazed; does Mr. Dormer want me? what can he possibly want with me?'

'Will not you go with her, madam?' said Sir William.

'No, indeed, replied Mrs. Romney; my going would, I think, be very impertinent.'

'Not at all, madam, cried Sir William eagerly, not at all, in your own house.'

'Give me leave, Sir William, said the lady, to know what is proper to be done. Mr. Dormer has private, particular business with Sophia.'

'Private business! cried Sir William, particular business! you make me mad; of what nature, for G-d's sake, is this private business?'

'Nay

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‘ Nay now, my dear Sir William,  
‘ said Mrs. Romney laughing, how can  
‘ you be so intolerably curious? ’Tis  
‘ really not polite to be so. I wonder  
‘ Miss Fanbrook takes no notice of your  
‘ curiosity.’

‘ Do, madam, said Sophia, looking at  
Sir William, do go with me.’

‘ Pray excuse me, my dear,’ replied  
Mrs. Romney.’

Sophia then went into the next room,  
and in the mean time Sir William walk-  
ed up and down with the greatest emo-  
tion, for which he was reprimanded by  
his aunt.

‘ What occasions such a violent agita-  
‘ tion? cried she; what are you afraid  
‘ of? have you not Sophia’s promise,  
‘ that she will never love any other but  
‘ Beecher and you? Indeed, Sir Wil-  
‘ liam, you are unreasonable; have you  
‘ so little confidence in her?’

‘ Oh, she is all goodness, cried he ;  
‘ but yet you don’t know what it is to  
‘ be in love.’

She only answered him with a laugh, and went to Mr. Dormer, as she concluded that by this time her company might be acceptable to Sophia, who, as soon as she saw her, made the gentleman a low curtsy, and left him with her friend.

When Sophia returned to Sir William, he flew to her in a transport, and taking both her hands, ‘ My dear Miss Fanbrook, said he, can you suffer me  
‘ to languish any longer in suspense ?’

‘ About what ?’ said she, smiling with the greatest good-humour.

‘ About Mr. Dormer’s visit to you ;  
‘ I am on the rack of impatience to  
‘ know what he has been saying to  
‘ you.’

‘ What

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‘ What do you think ? said she laughing, can’t you guess ? Come, do guess, and I will tell you if you are right.’

‘ Cruel trisler, replied he, looking gravely at her, is this like my Sophia ?’

‘ Well, come then, said she, smile on me again, and I will tell you all.’

‘ Do not I always smile on thee, my angel ? answered he ; do not I always look at thee with rapture and delight ?’

‘ To put an end to your perplexity then, interrupted she, Mr. Dormer, after a short apology, and a few fine speeches, made a mighty se--ri--ous proposal ; and I made as se--ri--ous a curtsy, told him I was engaged, and so I left him with my good Mrs. Romney.’

‘ Sweet girl ! said Sir William, with brightening features at this refusal, and her lively manner of wording it.’

From that day Mr. Dormer, who found he had no hopes of success, made less and less frequent visits to Mrs. Romney, not thinking it prudent to trust himself to the continual admiration of a woman, who had sufficiently discouraged his addresses to her. Sir William, on the other hand, more and more animated by her perpetual good-humour, and her affable behaviour to him, redoubled his assiduities to please and divert her, for Beecher was still too often uppermost in her thoughts for her repose.

Sir William ordered his carriage to be ready one morning after breakfast. ‘ If you will trust yourself with me, my dear Miss Fanbrook, said he, I will carry you to make a visit to your uncle ; but then you must assure me, upon your honour, that you will let me bring you back again.’

She thanked him, but said, she had no inclination to leave Windsor at present.

‘ May

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‘ May I then, said he, depend upon finding you when I return ?’

‘ When will you be cured of your suspicions, Sir William ? said she laughing ; trust me this once, and make haste home.’

This obliging command, as it was more than he had ever received before, filled him with a gaiety and chearfulness he had long been a stranger to ; but made him at the same time loth to leave her, even for a moment. Reflecting, however, that he was only going to procure some new amusement for her, in consequence of an advertisement in the paper of the day, he set off in high spirits, and had the not-to-be-described satisfaction, to see her accompany Mrs. Romney quite to the side of the chariot to wish him a good morning, while he, scarcely able to lose sight of her, kept his head out of the window, till the turning of it obstructed so pleasing a view.

Hardly had Sophia got into her chamber, when the post-man brought a packet to Mrs. Romney, upon the opening of which she found that it came from Mr. Besfield, who acquainted her that he had received news from a correspondent abroad, of the death of Mr. Beecher. The following are the principal contents: ‘If Sophia is not yet  
‘cured of her inclination for that gentleman by Sir William’s amiable behaviour, I beg you would communicate this intelligence to her in the  
‘gentlest manner you can; though I cannot help thinking, but that Sophia  
‘should have weaned herself from all  
‘tendernefs for him, after she heard  
‘that he was married. I have inclosed  
‘my friend’s letter, that you may be  
‘satisfied of the truth of what I have  
‘asserted.’ The letter concluded with abundance of apologies for the trouble his family had given her, and as many acknowledgments for her numberless favours conferred upon his niece.

Mrs.

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Mrs. Romney was very much surprized at this news, but thought it lucky that Sophia was not present when she received it, as she knew she had not yet conquered her affection for Beecher so much as not to be violently afflicted at his death. She sat, for some time, revolving in her mind what method to take; and then perusing the merchant's letter, discovered the subsequent paragraph.

‘ In my last I sent you an account of  
‘ the sudden marriage of a most agree-  
‘ able young gentleman of your place,  
‘ Mr. Edward Beecher. I have now  
‘ the concern to inform you of his  
‘ death, which happened about ten days  
‘ ago, after he had been married but a  
‘ fortnight. Every body here, who had  
‘ the pleasure of knowing him, is much  
‘ grieved for his loss, as he was re-  
‘ markably pleasing, both in his person  
‘ and disposition, and was universally  
‘ beloved. His widow is quite incon-  
‘ solable.’

After

After having read this letter twice, Mrs. Romney went into Sophia's apartment, but deferred breaking this melancholy news to her, till she had advised with Sir William, who had now made so great a progress in her esteem, that she hoped he might be of some service in this affair. She talked, therefore, of indifferent subjects at first, with her young friend, and then took occasion to observe, that she never saw a man so entirely devoted to a woman as Sir William was to her ; that she owed his reformation totally to her ; and that she really believed, if he was deprived of all hopes of her, he would lose his senses.

‘ I hope not, my dear madam, said Sophia, with a sigh : no-body ever loved  
‘ with more true affection than I have  
‘ loved, and yet I have preserved my  
‘ senses, in the midst of all my disappointments.’

‘ Thank heaven that you have, my  
‘ dear, said Mrs. Romney ; but could  
‘ you

‘ you support the news of Beecher’s  
‘ death with tolerable fortitude ?’

‘ L--d, madam, said Sophia, you chill  
‘ me with horror ; I shudder at the  
‘ thoughts of it : how can such melan-  
‘ choly notions come into your head ?’

‘ Nay, for that matter, replied Mrs.  
‘ Romney, if he had never married, I  
‘ should not have wondered at your af-  
‘ flicting yourself for his loss, were such  
‘ an event to happen ; but surely after  
‘ his marriage, he deserves to be no  
‘ longer remembered by you. It is  
‘ hardly consistent, I think, my dear  
‘ Sophia, with the great delicacy of  
‘ your sentiments in general, to think  
‘ so deeply about him.’

Mrs. Romney was proceeding in this manner, when a servant came and told her that a person wanted to speak with her below ; upon which she left Sophia, a little surprized at the abrupt beginning of a conversation which had filled her head with a thousand gloomy ideas,  
on

on which she could not help dwelling till Sir William's return, with the prettiest bird in his hand she had ever seen. His appearance, and the beautiful little creature together, turned her thoughts into a more agreeable channel.

Sir William had observed that Sophia was mightily pleased with a couple of lapwings which were in Mrs. Romney's garden to pick up the worms; and he thought that the paroquet he brought with him, one of the most perfect of the kind, would serve to amuse her, as it was very tame, and would, as he was informed, talk very well.

Sophia met him in the parlour, and received his present with a smile of satisfaction, and, sitting down, began to admire excessively the little creature, who seemed so much pleased with her gentle treatment, that it was not willing to leave her. This unwillingness to leave her made her redouble her caresses, of which she was so liberal, that Sir William wished himself a thousand

times in the place of the paroquet, and would have almost submitted to a metamorphosis upon such conditions.

After having again expressed her thanks, Sophia went up stairs, to fix upon a place for the hanging of the cage; and then Mrs. Romney shewed Mr. Besfield's letter to Sir William, who, at first, began to conceive hopes of her consenting to be united to him now, as there was no obstacle to surmount: but when he considered how much she had loved Beecher, he shook with apprehension at the condition into which the news of his death would plunge her. He conjured Mrs. Romney, in the most supplicating terms, to prepare her for this shocking event; and to administer consolation to her with the most delicate address in her power. 'Support my beloved Sophia, my dearest aunt, said he, during her distressful moments. I tremble for the sweet girl; if I lose her, I am undone: there will then be an end to all my happiness in this world.'

Will

‘ Will you be present, said Mrs.  
‘ Romney, when I break it to her?’

‘ By no means, replied he; she will, I  
‘ think, be better pleased to be alone  
‘ with you; only tell her, that I am  
‘ despairing on her account; that I  
‘ sympathize with her in her affliction;  
‘ that I adore her, and that the future  
‘ business of my life shall be to afford  
‘ her all the relief I can.’

Mrs. Romney thought her nephew judged rightly, in leaving her to disclose this disagreeable news by herself, though she was very unhappy in being the person pitched upon to do it. She deferred it till after dinner, and then Sir William, making a pretence to look at his horses, she, by degrees, endeavoured to prepare her to sustain the blow with which she was going to strike her.

Sophia, shocked as she was, sustained the blow with more fortitude than her friend expected; all she said was, ‘ Then  
‘ he

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' he is gone for ever, and never knew  
' how much I loved him !'

This apparent resignation, however, was attended with serious consequences. Her grief, for want of a vent, preyed inwardly upon her spirits, and she was, before morning, extremely indisposed. She had desired Mrs. Romney not to insist upon her going down to supper, telling her that she could not touch a morsel; and intreated her to acquaint Sir William, that she was perfectly sensible of his great regard for her, as well as of his friendship; and that she hoped she should not be ungrateful. She said but little after this, and Mrs. Romney would not be prevented from passing the night with her, imagining that if she had an inclination to ease her heart, by communicating its sorrows, the encouragement of that inclination might relieve her. But Sophia only expressed her thanks for all Mrs. Romney's goodness to her, and answered all advances she made to comfort her with a deep sigh.

Sir

Sir William, who was in agonies about his dear Sophia, closed not his eyes all night. Mrs. Romney could, indeed, scarce prevail on him to go to bed. He wanted to stay at her chamber-door; but as she convinced him that his situation there would be to little purpose, and that Sophia might be displeased if she heard of it, he retired; but rose long before day, and watched the coming out of the servant, who usually attended his aunt and Sophia, with the most anxious impatience, to enquire after her. The maid gave a very indifferent account of her. As soon as Mrs. Romney quitted her apartment, he begged her to tell him how his dear Sophia bore the shock, and how she spent the night.

‘ She bore the first shock, said Mrs. Romney, much better than I expected, but I am greatly afraid of the consequences.’

‘ For heaven’s sake, madam, replied Sir William hastily, with a distracted  
‘ air,

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‘ air, send for some advice directly ;  
‘ send away to Dr. Wise, who attend-  
‘ ed me—no—I will go myself this  
‘ moment’——

‘ Stay, Sir William, said his discreet  
‘ aunt, consider before you act; though  
‘ I have the care of Miss Fanbrook, she  
‘ has an uncle and relations, by whom  
‘ she is dearly beloved: it will be quite  
‘ proper to consult them.’

‘ But that will be losing time, cried  
‘ he, and her danger may be increased  
‘ by delay. O my G-d! if I lose her,  
‘ all is over with me.’

Mrs. Romney in vain preached pati-  
ence to him, while she wrote a card to  
Mr. Besfield. Before she had finished  
it, she received another letter from that  
gentleman, with one to Sophia, which  
he begged her to deliver, after the com-  
munication of Beecher’s death. This  
letter, she imagined, contained all the  
consolatory things which her kind uncle  
was capable of saying. She immedi-  
ately

ately, carried it up to her, and told her at the same time, that she was writing to him.

Sophia scarce took any notice of what her friend said; she only desired her to thank her uncle for his letter. In vain did she press her with the most affectionate importunities to take nourishment. She was able to swallow nothing but liquids, and continued in a state of stupefaction all that day and the next.

While Sir William was in an absolute frenzy below stairs, on the morning after arrived Mrs. Besfield and the apothecary who had attended Sophia in the small-pox, and who, after he had told them what they knew before, that her disorder was upon her spirits, ordered her a load of bolusses, drops, &c. &c. &c. and then returned to town with her aunt.

Mrs. Besfield, during her stay, told Mrs. Romney that Juliet was almost as melancholy

melancholy as Sophia, and that she did not know what to do with them. However, as she had been a witness of Sir William's extravagant love for Sophia, she thought that whenever she had a mind to inform Juliet of it, the information might contribute to her cure.

As the medical gentleman who accompanied Mrs. Besfield, had ordered Sophia to keep her bed, she, willing to conceal her grief as much as possible, that she might not give her friend any disquiet, readily complied. This, with her inability to take proper sustenance, rendered her so excessively weak, that Mrs. Romney could not flatter Sir William any longer with hopes of her recovery. Not that she thought she was in immediate danger; but she was apprehensive of her going into a decline, which might prove fatal.

Sir William was now almost in the same condition with Sophia, and begged his aunt no longer to oppose his going to Dr. Wise; and she, not finding the apoth-

apothecary's medicines efficacious, consented.

Away he posted with the utmost expedition, and brought the doctor back with him, whom he had all the way intreated to use his deepest skill towards the recovery of the young lady to whom he was going; assuring him that his own life depended upon it; and that he would amply reward him, if his sagacity was successful. The doctor replied, that he wanted no inducements to exert his best endeavours to assist any of his friends, and that he might rely upon his most assiduous attendance.

As Mrs. Romney had prepared Sophia to receive the doctor, she was not surprized at the sight of him. He felt her pulse, and told her that she must not keep her bed; that it weakened her very much, and would be of no service to her indisposition. ‘ I will order you, ‘ added he, something to take in the ‘ afternoon, and will call to see you to-morrow; but I beg you will receive all ‘ the

‘ the nourishment you can bear, for that  
‘ will do you more good than my me-  
‘ dicines.’

When Dr. Wise left his patient, the  
restless Sir William waited at the door,  
and intreated him to tell him sincerely  
if there were any hopes. ‘ The lady,  
‘ replied he, has youth, and a good  
‘ habit of body; but as the disorder she  
‘ labours under, is chiefly upon her  
‘ spirits, too much physic will only re-  
‘ tard the operations of nature, which  
‘ require only a gentle assistance. She  
‘ must by no means keep her bed, or  
‘ even confine herself to her chamber;  
‘ she should be brought down, and  
‘ amused with all the variety which can  
‘ be procured.’

To this speech of the doctor Mrs.  
Romney replied, ‘ I am afraid, Sir, she  
‘ will not be able to sit up, nor have  
‘ strength to go down stairs.’

‘ She must begin, returned the doc-  
‘ tor, by sitting up two or three hours  
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‘ at a time, and continue so longer  
‘ and longer, as you find her strength  
‘ increasing. She must be carried down  
‘ stairs in a day or two at farthest; for as  
‘ the weather now begins to be fine,  
‘ the air will be of great advantage to  
‘ her; when she grows stronger, I shall  
‘ order her to ride out. A change of  
‘ objects, and variety of amusements,  
‘ are in these cases capital remedies;  
‘ and I have known them do wonders,  
‘ where physic failed.’

Poor Sophia, who suffered Mrs. Romney to do what she would with her, was taken up, and supported by pillows for a day or two, till the weakness contracted by her lying in bed abated a little; and then Sir William, who had proposed to carry her down stairs in his arms, but who had not yet seen her, begged to be admitted. She agreed to every thing which Mrs. Romney proposed, who dedicated her whole attention to her. The only sensibility she expressed about any thing for many days, was by now and then saying,  
‘ Why,

‘Why, my dear friend, was I born to give you so much trouble?’

When Sir William came into the room, she was reclined on one side, in an easy chair, with her fine eyes half-closed, and her mouth a little open, as she had frequently complained, when they moved her, of a difficulty in breathing: her face was as pale as the night-cloaths which were wrapped about her, and her arms hung almost lifeless. She just looked up, when she heard Sir William, though he scarce seemed to move, so softly did he step, and made an effort to rise, which he prevented, and taking up one of her hands, pressed it to his lips. He could not speak; shocked at her pallid appearance, his knees knocked together, and his words were chained up. She saw, she pitied his distress, and had just strength enough to grasp his hand, to convince him, by that pressure, of her friendship, which, at another time, would have given him uncommon satisfaction; but he was then so truly terrified at the condition

in which he saw her, that it occasioned a very slight emotion in him.

Mrs. Romney plainly perceiving that her nephew's terrors would, by affecting Sophia too much, be very prejudicial, said to him, 'Come, Sir William, you have now seen our dear Sophia; when she is better, you shall stay longer with her; you must now go down with me.' He was loth to comply; he looked aghast, and she was forced to pull him along. He followed with reluctance, turning frequently to his dear Sophia, and lifting up his eyes to heaven with the most animated anguish.

When Mrs. Romney, with much difficulty, had got Sir William down stairs, 'My G-d, cried he, bursting into tears, and throwing himself into the first chair he came to, she is gone—for ever—ever—gone!

Here sobs and sighs stopped his speech, and Mrs. Romney, who was quite fretted to see him thus, said,  
'My

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‘ My dear Sir William, for G-d’s sake,  
‘ do not give way in this gloomy man-  
‘ ner to despair; you are the most im-  
‘ proper person in the world to be about  
‘ sick and low-spirited people; Sophia  
‘ wants to be diverted, and not to be  
‘ cried over.’

‘ O madam, madam, replied he, she  
‘ will no more be diverted in this  
‘ world; I must lose her; and to in-  
‘ crease my misery, lose her at the very  
‘ time when there is no longer any op-  
‘ position to my happiness.’

Here a fresh torrent of tears made an  
addition to Mrs. Romney’s impatience.

‘ You are enough, said she, to make  
‘ any-body mad. Do you not think  
‘ that I have an infinite regard for So-  
‘ phia as well as you? and can you sup-  
‘ pose that I should be tolerably easy if  
‘ I thought she was in danger?’

‘ My dear aunt, cried he, rising up  
‘ in a hurry, and don’t you think her in  
‘ danger?’

C 3

‘ No,

‘ No, to be sure, replied she ; so far  
‘ from it, she is better than she was  
‘ yesterday ; and I wanted you to help  
‘ me to amuse her a little ; but instead  
‘ of assisting me, you looked as if you  
‘ was frightened out of your senses.’

‘ I was indeed frightened extremely,  
‘ said he, and am not yet come to my-  
‘ self : Who could be otherwise who  
‘ loves, who doats as I do, to see the  
‘ charming face of his beloved mistress  
‘ as pale as death ; to see her eyes al-  
‘ most closed ; to see her with her dear  
‘ mouth, which I could grow to for  
‘ ages, half open, struggling for breath ?  
‘ This shock was too much for me to  
‘ support.’

‘ Bless me, cried Mrs. Romney, you  
‘ are now as ridiculous with your rap-  
‘ tures, as you were before with your  
‘ fears.’

‘ But do you really think, my dear  
‘ aunt, that she will ever get over it ?  
‘ If you do, I am blest beyond expression.’

‘ I will

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‘ I will say no more to you, replied  
‘ Mrs. Romney, for Sophia will wonder  
‘ where I am.’

When she went up again, Sophia, who imagined that the little notice she had taken of Sir William, had induced him to leave the room so abruptly, made some kind of apology for her inattention, to Mrs. Romney, who at night repeated it to her nephew.

‘ And can she possibly, sweet girl,  
‘ said he, amidst all her sufferings, think  
‘ of me? O she is too good.’

The next day he made her another visit, and behaved with more fortitude. She was able to speak a few words to him; for by sitting up, and increasing her sustenance, she had increased her strength, though it but very slowly returned.

The following day was fixed upon for carrying her down stairs. Sir William, notwithstanding his fears, undertook

took that pleasing office, and succeeded so well as to bring her safe into the parlour, and placed her on the sofa; but while he was gazing at her with transport (for the languishing attitude she was in, added to a beautiful colour which the uncommon motion, and perhaps the necessity she had been under of throwing one of her snowy arms round his neck to support herself, had given her, made her look very enchanting) she, on a sudden, changed from red to pale, and fainted.

Sir William, alarmed at every motion, once more thought she was dying, and shrieked so loud, that the sound of his voice, together with the fumes arising from an Eau-de-luce bottle, which he held to her on his knees, soon brought her to herself. She grew a little better; and as her lover was always at her side when she was below, always trying to please and to amuse her, she could not help, now and then, expressing her acknowledgments.

What

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What would have made any other woman's heart glow with the warmest affection, was not quite lost upon Sophia's; yet was she not acquainted with half the pains her lover took to make himself beloved by her. He loaded Dr. Wise with presents of all kinds; overwhelmed his good aunt with thanks for her care of Sophia, which were accompanied with the most generous offers. His servants (for he had ordered those at his country house to remove to Windsor, though only John was in the house) were always riding here and there to procure all sorts of rarities, both for food and amusement; so that there was nothing to be purchased, but what Sophia might have commanded, if the possession of it would have made her happy.

Sophia was not insensible of Sir William's repeated assiduities to forward the recovery of her health, and to relieve the anxieties of her mind; but could not yet bring herself to return his love. Sometimes she told Mrs. Romney that

she was not worth all the care she had bestowed upon her. ‘ If Beecher had but  
‘ lived, said she, till I had found an opportunity of repairing the injury I  
‘ had done him, I think, my dear friend,  
‘ that I could have borne his loss with  
‘ more resignation.’

‘ You do but deceive yourself, my  
‘ dear, said Mrs. Romney, in fancying  
‘ so; you would then have found his  
‘ loss more insupportable than it ought  
‘ to be now, as he, divested of his passion for you, married another woman. But, indeed, my amiable Sophia, let it be how it will, you are  
‘ very censurable to afflict yourself in  
‘ this manner; it is your duty, and  
‘ should be your inclination, to submit  
‘ to the decrees of Providence, which  
‘ orders every thing for the best, and  
‘ points out to you the way to consolation, if you are disposed to follow it.’

Sophia answered her with a sigh, and with a wish that it might be in her power to return her infinite kindness,  
of

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of which she was every day giving new proofs.

The doctor, when he thought his patient was able to bear a carriage, proposed an airing to her, and Mrs. Romney and they went in the chariot, by the side of which Sir William walked his horse, that Sophia might have room to sit easy.

The country began to appear in all its vernal beauty, and he pointed out to her every pleasing prospect, every picturesque view, which he thought worthy of her attention.

As doctor Wise had told them that variety should be as much studied in her exercise as in every thing else relating to her, the carriage was ordered to stop now and then at an agreeable spot, where Sir William, dismounting, took her out, and supported her with his arm for a few yards, till she grew faintish, and then he lifted her in again.

Having all kinds of conveniences with them, though they went but a little way, she was continually pressed by her ever-diligent lover to take some refreshment. Jellies, and cakes of all sizes, colours, and compositions, were at hand for that purpose, to allure her eye, and to stimulate her appetite. But it was a long time before a tolerable appetite could be excited, with all the preparations made to provoke it.

Mrs. Besfield came again to see her; and her uncle called twice or thrice for that purpose, soon after his consolatory letter, on horseback. When he found her mend a little, he began to intreat her to make use of her reason, and to endeavour to shake off her discontent, and conquer her repugnance to a man, who had, with a generosity rarely to be met with, sacrificed his health, his happiness, and his fortune, to her alone. ‘ Your  
‘ worthy friend Mrs. Romney, said he,  
‘ tells me (and indeed my own eyes  
‘ have verified her words since I came  
‘ here) that his life is entirely and  
‘ closely

‘ closely connected with yours ; that he  
 ‘ can neither eat, drink, nor sleep ; and  
 ‘ did I not know that to be the case,  
 ‘ his altered looks, occasioned by your  
 ‘ illness, plainly proves how much he  
 ‘ suffers for your sake : let friendship,  
 ‘ then, let gratitude, and every tender  
 ‘ consideration, oblige you to declare in  
 ‘ his favour, who has so indisputable a  
 ‘ right to the possession of your heart—  
 ‘ Here he comes—let me, therefore, have  
 ‘ the unspeakable pleasure of telling  
 ‘ him, that you are ready to reward his  
 ‘ love.’

As her uncle had never spoken so warmly before to her on this subject, and as her spirits were yet too low to bear a conversation on it ; Sophia made no reply but with her tears, which flowed plentifully down her face.

This moving sight roused all Sir William’s compassion, and though he was before ready to embrace Mr. Besfield for speaking so largely in his behalf, the distress of his Sophia melted him, and he

he cried, ' Ah! don't force her—don't  
' constrain her, my good Mr. Besfield,  
' to say or do any thing against her will.'

' No, Sir William, said the almost  
' conquered Sophia, quite softened with  
' gratitude, I am not constrained to tell  
' you that, if I live, I will be—yours—  
' do but give me time to get well first.'

' Thou sweetest, loveliest angel, cried  
' he, pressing her in his arms, and kifs-  
' ing away the pearly drops before they  
' rolled from her eyes, though a gene-  
' ral tremor seized him at the same time,  
' how shall I express my sense of the  
' great, the exquisite delight, this pro-  
' mise has given me? for so I look upon  
' it—may I not, my love?'

' Yes, yes, said her friend Mrs. Rom-  
' ney, and it is high time for you to  
' have it, I think.'

' Well then, my dear uncle, said the  
' tender-hearted Sophia, breaking from  
' her lover's arms to take him round  
' the

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‘ the neck, have I not now atoned for  
‘ my past follies? will you not forgive  
‘ me, and receive me as your niece  
‘ again?’

‘ You cannot, O, you cannot resist  
‘ her, cried the transported Sir William,  
‘ looking at her with the most enrapt-  
‘ tured fondness; the least request of  
‘ her’s becomes too considerable to be  
‘ refused, by the enchanting manner in  
‘ which it is urged.’

‘ You will spoil her, I see, Sir Wil-  
‘ liam, said Mr. Besfield smiling, and  
‘ tapping her on the cheek; go, thou  
‘ art a good girl, continued he, make  
‘ haste to get well, and be an obedient  
‘ wife.’

‘ No, my adored Sophia, replied Sir  
‘ William, the obedience shall be on  
‘ my side; all your actions shall be as  
‘ much directed by inclination as they  
‘ are at this instant.’

Sophia,

Sophia, though she behaved so properly before her uncle, reflected when she was alone upon what she had said, and re-considered the more than half-made promise; and her reflections were not thoroughly agreeable to her. She did not wish to recall her promise, but she wished to have felt more affectionate sentiments for Sir William, before she had agreed to become his wife. Recollecting, however, that as she was far from being well, the performance of it would not be speedily executed, she comforted herself with having time for the exertion of her endeavours to like him better and better; endeavours which she was willing to exert.

These reflections, though they flattered her delicacy, very much interrupted her repose, during those hours which ought to be chiefly devoted to it, consequently very much retarded her recovery: and by thus interrupting her own repose, she destroyed that of her friend; for Mrs. Romney, who had never slept from her since the beginning  
of

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of her indisposition, trusted her to no person but herself.

As Sir William's bookseller sent him all the new publications, a thought came into his aunt's head, to make some of them particularly useful at this juncture. At the return of Sophia one day from a walk, fatigued and leaning upon Sir William's arm, having sauntered to a greater distance than she intended at first setting out, she insisted on her lying down upon the sofa, sitting herself by her side. 'Come, Sir William, said she, read to us one of those idle tales which you litter the house with, and which are only fit to make one sleepy; I have found such books very efficacious when I wanted rest.'

Sophia was obliged to comply, tho' she made a few faint efforts to resist; and Sir William performed his task so happily, that she soon fell into a slumber. At the moment she dropped into it, he laid aside his book, and folding his arms across his breast, contemplated her

her beauties in that situation, and fixed his eyes upon them in so passionate a manner, that when she waked, she appeared in the sweetest confusion imaginable, and rising hastily, ‘ I will try, ‘ said she, another time, to sleep in the ‘ night.’

Sir William smiled with tenderness at the delicacy of her sensations; but sitting down by her, and taking her hand, which he fondly kissed, ‘ Why, ‘ why, cried he, sweetest Sophia, do you ‘ wish to deny me the innocent, but ‘ most delightful, pleasure of looking ‘ at you? The survey of your beauties ‘ can be in no shape injurious to you, ‘ and it affords me the highest satisfaction; why then will you deprive me ‘ of it?’

As he spoke these few words with an uncommon gravity of countenance, she coloured at the reproach, which she sensibly felt, and with the most winning accent in the world, said, ‘ Indeed, Sir ‘ William, you wrong me, if you think  
‘ I do

‘ I do not wish to give you every satisfaction in my power, and that I am not trying every day to love you better and better.’

‘ Dearest creature, cried he, pressing her hand to his beating bosom, do you then love me at all ? and was not that promise you gave almost extorted from you by your uncle ?’

‘ No, indeed, replied she, there was no compulsion in the case ; not even the duty which I owe to so good an uncle could oblige me to promise what I did not intend to perform with the greatest punctuality. But won’t you, added she smiling, have patience with me ? You, in your turn, promised to give me time.’

‘ Yes, yes, my dearest life, said Sir William, quite softened with this unexpected answer, so full of kindness, which suspended the powers of utterance for a moment ; be assured, my adored Sophia, I will keep my word  
‘ with

‘ with equal exactness; you shall command me in every thing; you reign absolute mistress of my heart, and I have no will but yours.’

The various emotions which Sir William felt during this conversation, at last entirely overcame him. He rose and walked out of the room to conceal them.

Mrs. Romney seeing a change in his countenance, asked him, with her usual eagerness, if he was not well.

This question alarmed Sophia, and she followed him, taking him kindly by the hand, and repeating it.

‘ Well, my dear girl; said he, gazing at her with the greatest tenderness, and fetching a deep sigh—yes—I am well—but—you are too lovely.’

‘ How, replied she, looking all abashed, and hastily letting go his hand, have

‘ have I committed any fault? I have  
‘ not, I am sure, intentionally.’

‘ You never can commit a fault, my  
‘ dearest, cried he, folding the arms  
‘ of affection round her neck, but so  
‘ much happiness at a time, when I was  
‘ afraid that I had displeased you, af-  
‘ fected me beyond measure; and you,  
‘ innocently ignorant of the great, the  
‘ boundless power you have over me,  
‘ misinterpreted my looks, and misun-  
‘ derstood my words.’

Mrs. Romney, overjoyed to see them  
at last upon such good terms, asked So-  
phia laughing, whether she would never  
be accustomed to Sir William’s ecstasies,  
and thereby gave a lively turn to the  
conversation, which grew, she thought,  
rather too affecting for Sir William to  
support; for he actually doated on So-  
phia to such an extravagant degree,  
that he frequently sat, full of admira-  
tion at her, while she worked, read, or  
played on the organ, till the tears of  
transport started from his eyes, and  
forced

forced him to quit the room, for fear she should, by seeing them, be made uneasy.

As Sophia grew visibly better, Dr. Wise's visits became less necessary, tho' Sir William was always glad of his company, and called him, in conjunction with his aunt, the preserver of his Sophia. However, before he took leave as a physician, he still advised as a friend, the continuance of those prescriptions which had been so efficacious, among which a varied series of amusement was particularly recommended.

Agreeably to the opinion of a physician who had so successfully prescribed for the charmer of his heart, Sir William formed schemes for her entertainment. Being a warm admirer of the polite arts, and having a capital collection of pictures, he proposed drawing. She agreed to his proposal, without the least hesitation, and all materials for the study of that pleasing art were instantly procured. He knew enough of drawing

ing to instruct her in the rudiments of it, and she again became his scholar. She was a promising pupil, soon traced out landscapes and flowers with accuracy and elegance, and, without saying a word to Sir William, drew a pattern for a pair of ruffles, with which she intended to surprize him.

As Mrs. Romney was acquainted with her design, she soon made a great progress in her work; though Sir William, afraid that by sitting too much to her needle, she would retard her recovery, often interrupted her, to walk or to ride, when she was well enough to accompany him on horseback.

This new drawing-scheme pleased Sir William so much, that he begged Sophia to sit for her picture, which he intended to present to his aunt Romney, in return for the uncommon care she had taken during her illness. Sophia was all compliance; they went immediately to London, and she sat to Reynolds.

Sophia's

Sophia's picture was a whole-length, and the parlour was destined for its reception. Sir William, though it was admirably executed, like a true lover, did not think it handsome enough. He was not absolutely out of the way in his censures, but Reynolds did not deserve them. Sophia's whole person was excessively elegant, but her face was not striking, unless her features were in motion. When she spoke or smiled, there was a softness in her eyes, and an infinite number of graces fluttering about her mouth, which mocked all the powers of painting. The little paroquet which Sir William had given her, was introduced into her picture, at her request, because she thought the appearance of it there would be very agreeable to him.

When the picture was nearly finished, Sir William made some objections to the hands and arms; they were not, he said, so well rounded, so soft, as those of Sophia; nor had they that darling whiteness in them; and speaking of it one day,

day, after it came home, to Mrs. Romney, as he was holding her by the hand,  
 ‘ Did you ever see, madam, said he,  
 ‘ such a lovely hand, so delicate an arm?  
 ‘ No painter in the world can do justice  
 ‘ to them. How gracefully would they  
 ‘ look with bracelets? If my dear So-  
 ‘ phia’——Here he stopped, with his  
 eyes fixed upon her, as if fearful of pro-  
 ceeding; but after a little pause——  
 ‘ Though I am sure, continued he, that  
 ‘ she will have no objection to wear my  
 ‘ aunt’s picture on her arm.’

Sophia guessed what he would have  
 said, and thinking it would please him,  
 replied, ‘ And why may not I have your  
 ‘ picture also, Sir William? and then I  
 ‘ shall always have my two best friends  
 ‘ about me, madam, continued she, turn-  
 ‘ ing to Mrs. Romney.’

‘ Yes, my love, said Sir William, if  
 ‘ you will make me so infinitely happy,  
 ‘ by accepting of mine, I will sit di-  
 ‘ rectly.’

To this she made a genteel compliment; and Sir William, while the miniatures were painting, purchased some of the finest pearls to go round her arms, and ordered the cases for the portrait to be enriched with a great number of very valuable brilliants. But of this last piece of gallantry she was entirely ignorant.

While Sophia was thus carested and almost adored at Windsor, poor Juliet led but an uncomfortable life in town: but, as Mr. Besfield's affairs were in a great measure disembarassed, her aunt began again to take her abroad, and to endeavour to divert the gloom which had hung over her, ever since her removal from Sir William.

They were at Ranelagh one evening, when a gentleman, in company with some friends of Mr. Besfield, became her admirer to so great a degree, that after he had enquired into her situation in life, he waited on her uncle, and desired leave to make his addresses to her,  
and

and to endeavour to gain her affections, as the pensiveness of her air, and the seriousness of her aspect, so uncommon in the modern race of beauties, had given him no encouragement to his approaches. He frankly declared his circumstances to Mr. Besfield, who was very well satisfied by finding him a man of fortune; as his person was also agreeable, and his character, upon enquiry, unexceptionable, he assured him that he should receive his proposals to his niece as highly flattering to himself, and extremely for her.

Mr. Somers, that was his name, was of a very suitable age for Miss West; and in his person generally allowed to be handsome. But poor Juliet had taken such a violent inclination for Sir William, that she could not bear to think of admitting Mr. Somers as a lover. She blushed and turned pale by turns, while her uncle presented him to her; but the implicit obedience which she had ever shewn to him in matters of this nature,

whatever repugnance she felt, always superseded inclination.

As Juliet's most prevailing charm with her lover, detached from the beauties of her person, was a modesty in her carriage, which eminently and agreeably distinguished her, in his eyes, from the crowd of showy girls who flutter about at all public places; Mr. Somers attributed to that modesty alone, the bashfulness which she discovered at his desiring to pay his addresses to her, and left her, therefore, after his first visit, not in the least displeased with the overtures he had made.

Mr. and Mrs. Besfield were, during a great part of the time, in the room with them, and from the behaviour of their niece, conceived hopes that she would not be disgusted with her new lover. But as soon as Mr. Somers was gone, she felt so strong an aversion to him, that, with the greatest confusion in her looks, and hesitation in her voice, she begged her uncle and aunt not to be offended with her,  
for

for declaring that she could not like Mr. Somers, desiring them at the same time to tell him so when he came again.

Mr. Besfield discovered great vexation and much surprize at this declaration; and after he had enumerated the good qualities which her admirer possessed, asked her, in a sharp accent, what she expected in a husband, if this gentleman could not please her?

The intimidated Juliet blushed excessively at this stern reproof, and hung down her head, without uttering a syllable.

‘ I guess, said Mrs Besfield, who had  
 ‘ been long uneasy at her partial re-  
 ‘ membrance of Sir William, I guess  
 ‘ the reason of your refusal, Miss:’ then  
 turning to her husband, ‘ She has thought  
 ‘ proper, my dear, I fancy, to chuse for  
 ‘ herself. But do you consider, Juliet,  
 ‘ again addressing herself to her, how  
 ‘ very absurdly every woman acts who  
 ‘ deviates from the customs of her sex,

‘ and how much she degrades herself in  
‘ the eyes of the man, who must despise  
‘ her, who is weak enough to persist in  
‘ being attached to him, while he is  
‘ actually dying for another, and to re-  
‘ fuse those alone that propose to make  
‘ her happy?’

As this charge was too direct to be mistaken, though Mrs. Besfield mentioned not any names, Juliet’s confusion was redoubled by it, and she was ready to sink to the ground, on which she certainly would have fallen, if a shower of tears had not seasonably relieved her.

Mr. Besfield being obliged at that juncture, to go out on some particular business, left Juliet with her aunt, who lectured her a great while with great propriety, on the imprudence of her behaviour at Windsor, which was, she told her, so striking to Mrs. Romney, that she reprimanded her nephew severely, as she concluded that he must have made very indiscreet addresses to her (at the same time that she knew he  
was

was engaged to Sophia) by the prodigious advances she made to him. ‘ And  
 ‘ to tell you the truth, continued Mrs.  
 ‘ Besfield, it was in consequence of a  
 ‘ kind letter which I received from her  
 ‘ on your account, that I fetched you  
 ‘ away. I never mentioned this cir-  
 ‘ cumstance to you, Juliet, before, be-  
 ‘ cause I thought your own good sense,  
 ‘ joined to the education which your  
 ‘ uncle and I have endeavoured to give  
 ‘ you, would have made you conscious  
 ‘ of your error; but as I see that you  
 ‘ still persevere in it, I must tell you,  
 ‘ Miss West, that there is nothing so  
 ‘ contrary to the modesty, on which every  
 ‘ woman ought to set a particular value,  
 ‘ than the encouragement of an incli-  
 ‘ nation for a man before he has honour-  
 ‘ ably addressed her. Sir William Acres  
 ‘ has solemnly assured his aunt, that he  
 ‘ never had the least notion of loving  
 ‘ you; never liked you at all: and in-  
 ‘ deed he has plainly proved his words,  
 ‘ by his extravagant fondness for your  
 ‘ cousin Sophia, which she now returns;  
 ‘ and they are, you know, soon to be  
 D 4 ‘ married.

‘ married. Consider, therefore, child,  
‘ how you lessen yourself to bestow a  
‘ thought upon Sir William. For my  
‘ part, I believe I should be ready to  
‘ expire with shame, if I only apprehend-  
‘ ed that any man could imagine I had  
‘ given him any encouragement first,  
‘ and should look upon myself in the  
‘ light of an abandoned wanton.’

As every syllable of this warm invective against love in young women went to the heart of Juliet, who now not only felt herself miserable, but almost infamous, she was indeed covered with confusion, and ready to die with shame. After a second shower of tears, she, with great humility, besought Mrs. Besfield to forgive her, and earnestly promised not to be guilty again of the indiscretion of which she had been accused. ‘ Yet, my  
‘ dear aunt, added she, with an interrupted voice, do not make me unhappy for ever—do not oblige me to  
‘ marry Mr. Somers.’

Mrs.

Mrs. Besfield was so angry with her, for expressing so thorough a dislike to so good an offer, that she made no answer; consequently Mr. Somers repeated his visits.

Sophia's health now began to be almost re-established; and she appeared more lovely than ever in Sir William's eyes, who felt himself every day more and more satisfied with the affability of her behaviour to him. It gave a new flow to his spirits; it raised new transports in his heart; it also not a little improved his appearance. He now really became a most agreeable man; though not tall in stature, he was extremely well proportioned; his complexion, when in high health, was a lively brown; his hair, which grew very gracefully, auburn. His features were not remarkably regular, though not unpleasing when animated. At first sight the seriousness in his air, was mistaken for pride; but as soon as he spoke, those who thought they discovered that passion, were soon agreeably disappointed. He was possessed of

many personal attractions, but his capital charm lay in his eyes. They were uncommonly spirited, and full of fire; and when softened by love, no eyes in the world were more amiably expressive.

As Sir William began to flatter himself that he advanced swiftly in Sophia's favour, he attended more closely to the decoration of his person, and the accuracy of his dress. He had the art to find out her taste in cloaths, and by her taste always regulated his own.

When the bracelets were brought home, he flew to her with them. When she had admired the striking merit of the miniatures, the elegance and richness of the jewels, he fastened them round those arms which he always surveyed with rapture; and by devouring them with kisses, expressed the joy which her approbation excited in him.

Sophia, though she had suffered him to amuse himself with fastening on the bracelets, had not the least intention of accepting

accepting so valuable a present, till she was near her marriage; taking them therefore off, she told him, after a short pause, that they were much too splendid for her to wear at present.

Sir William, quite mortified and disconcerted at her returning them, stood confounded, while Sophia went out of the room to recollect the scattered thoughts which this dazzling present had given rise to. As an idle longing after pomp and splendor had been the principal cause of all her imprudences, at her first setting out in life, she was rather hurt than transported with a showy appearance, because it continually revived them in her memory. ‘ How  
‘ vain, said she, how ridiculous were my  
‘ former prepossessions in favour of fortune! and how little able are the  
‘ greatest advantages of that kind, to  
‘ afford one any real enjoyment, unless  
‘ they are shared with the dear object  
‘ of our affections! How very insignificant, alas! is all gaiety, all grandeur

‘ to the eye, when there is no peace,  
‘ no pleasure in the heart !’

These reflections gave birth, at length, to others of a different nature ; and she condemned herself for still declining to accept of Sir William’s hand, when she saw how much he sorrowed ; though he had hitherto testified his impatience only by his eyes, which, upon that subject, were ever particularly intelligent. She asked her heart if he deserved to be thus treated : her heart gave so strong a verdict against her, that she descended the staircase to meet him with an unusual alacrity.

When she entered the parlour, in which she had left him with Mrs. Romney, she found him sitting at one corner of the sofa, in the most desponding attitude to be conceived, leaning his head upon his hand, with the strongest marks of vexation in his countenance. She looked, at his neither moving when she entered, nor rising to meet her, as he used to, astonished. She turned her  
eyes

eyes from him towards her friend, who, she fancied, did not look upon her with her accustomed complacency. It occurred to her, therefore, immediately, that he might think her too nice, too scrupulous, with regard to the bracelets; and she was sorry she had made him uneasy at a time when he had flattered himself that his present would be acceptable.

‘ What is the matter with you, Sir  
 ‘ William, said she, with a more tender  
 ‘ air than she had ever yet assumed, are  
 ‘ you out of order? I hope that my  
 ‘ declining to wear such valuable orna-  
 ‘ ments does not give you any uneasi-  
 ‘ ness? When I consented to receive  
 ‘ your picture, I did not expect to re-  
 ‘ ceive it so richly adorned.’

‘ My resemblance, madam, said he  
 ‘ with a dejected tone, is of so little  
 ‘ consequence to you, that it cannot be  
 ‘ at all desirable without those orna-  
 ‘ ments, which are unfortunately not  
 ‘ agreeable to your taste. But why  
 ‘ should I give way to the supposition  
 ‘ that

‘ that the gift can be welcome, when  
‘ the giver is evidently not so ?’

Sophia was absolutely shocked and confounded with the air and manner in which Sir William pronounced these words : as she came with a full determination to grant his every request, the cold reception she met with chilled her to the soul. He continued sitting unmoved in his place, and when he had finished his speech, seemed to be overwhelmed with discontent.

Sophia had not, for a long while, beheld Sir William in such a situation ; it most sensibly touched her ; touched her even to tears, which she could not help shedding in great abundance : but not being willing that he should see them, nor yet knowing how to hide them from his observation, she turned her head to the other side of the sofa, and covered her face with her handkerchief.

Sir William, though he was extremely shocked at her refusing his portrait,

still doated on her with the same unabated fervor. He had kept his eyes fixed upon her, from her first coming down; but not knowing to what cause to attribute her tears, he grew restless and anxious to relieve her. He loved her too fondly to see her distressed, tho' but for a moment. He thought he had expressed too much resentment: this notion was confirmed by the increasing violence of her concern: he saw it with real compassion: he plainly perceived that her tender heart was almost torn asunder by a variety of conflicting passions. He was himself ready to burst with sorrow; he repented; he forgot, in an instant, all that he had said or done to displease her, and drawing nearer to her, cried, 'Oh! Sophia, I cannot bear to see you thus afflicted. If my foolish resentment has thrown you into this condition, I shall never forgive myself for giving a loose to it. On my knees, continued he falling at her feet, I ask your pardon; do but speak to me; do but condescend to look at me. If you cannot prevail on yourself to pronounce

‘ nounce my happiness with your lips,  
‘ one look from those dear eyes shall sa-  
‘ tisfy me, till I have better deserved  
‘ the pardon which I implore.’

Sophia rejoiced to see him so come to himself a little, for she was now thoroughly convinced that she had been in the wrong; and that her own false conjectures had occasioned all the concern which she had felt. As her disposition was naturally very mild, she gave him her hand to raise him, made him sit by her, and, as soon as she could recover herself, said, ‘ I believe, Sir William, ‘ that I have most reason to implore ‘ forgiveness: I have been too hasty: I ‘ did not sufficiently reflect before I ‘ spoke; I certainly did not foresee the ‘ consequences with which my words ‘ were attended. They have, I find, ‘ given you a great deal of uneasiness, ‘ but that was contrary to my intentions. Be assured, that your picture ‘ will be a valuable present to me; but ‘ I should be glad to have it in a little ‘ case, without those showy ornaments, ‘ that

‘ that I may always carry it about me.  
‘ When I am your wife, I shall wear  
‘ those elegant bracelets with pleasure  
‘ and with pride.’

The few words ‘ when I am your  
‘ wife’, had all the effect that was pro-  
posed upon the once more enraptured  
Sir William, who, no longer remembering  
that she had done any thing to of-  
fend him, seized her hand, and pressing  
it tenderly to his bosom, ‘ When, when,  
‘ my dear Sophia, said he, shall I be so  
‘ blest, as to have it in my power to call  
‘ you so?

‘ It will be some time, replied she  
‘ blushing, before we can both be  
‘ ready.’

‘ But will you, cried he, my lovely  
‘ angel, catching her in his arms, will  
‘ you, my adorable wife, now give me  
‘ your consent to make all necessary  
‘ preparations for that day, with all pos-  
‘ sible expedition? for that day, which  
‘ is to behold me the happiest of men?’

‘ I will,

‘ I will, said she, breaking from him.’

‘ Then do not, replied he, wild with joy; do not start from my arms now, my love, my life, my all that is valuable. O, madam, continued he, turning to Mrs. Romney, and shewing Sophia to her, whom he held by both hands, ‘ See, see, my bride, my wife; let us, I conjure you, my dear aunt, lose no time: let every thing be hastened; the least delay will make me mad.’

Mrs. Romney, smiling at his eagerness, said, ‘ I fancy, Sir William, you forget how much you will depend upon yourself on this occasion. There are, no doubt, writings to be drawn. Besides, you have neither visited your estate, nor given yourself any trouble about it these six months; and I suppose you intend to reside there, at least in the summer. And then you have not once been near your aunt Acres, during that time, though you confess that she has been ill, and that  
‘ she

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‘ she has sent many letters of invitation  
‘ to you. Will it not be proper, tho’  
‘ you have no occasion, to ask her con-  
‘ sent, to inform her that you are going  
‘ to be married?’

‘ You are in the right, madam, said  
‘ Sir William, I will send orders to  
‘ Mount Acres, to prepare the house,  
‘ if my Sophia chuses to be there, and  
‘ will write to my aunt: with my dear  
‘ Sophia’s leave, I will go to-morrow to  
‘ Mr. Besfield, and put the writings in  
‘ forwardness.’

‘ Can your affairs in the country, said  
‘ Mrs. Romney, be so well settled with-  
‘ out your appearing there to superin-  
‘ tend them?—I fancy not—Cannot you  
‘ trust Sophia with me for a week or  
‘ two? continued she, laughing.’

‘ One week, cried the enamoured  
‘ baronet, will be a thousand ages——  
‘ No, no, my dear aunt, never think I  
‘ can agree to that; let me rather beg  
‘ you to join with me, in prevailing on  
‘ my

‘ my Sophia to go down thither with  
‘ you, and then I shall have an agree-  
‘ able opportunity to amuse her with  
‘ a variety of new scenes, while she or-  
‘ ders every thing according to her own  
‘ taste. Will you not, continued he,  
‘ turning to her, and speaking in the  
‘ most beseeching accent, will you not  
‘ favour me, my angel, so far as to con-  
‘ sent to this proposal?’

‘ Readily, Sir William, replied she,  
‘ if you will first promise to ask the con-  
‘ sent of your aunt Acres: when you  
‘ have gained that, I shall have no ob-  
‘ jection to accompany you with my  
‘ dear Mrs. Romney. But I should be  
‘ very much afflicted to come into a fa-  
‘ mily in which I was not approved of,  
‘ and in which the smallness of my for-  
‘ tune might give rise to some disagree-  
‘ able observations.’

‘ No-body has any thing to do with  
‘ your fortune, my dear Sophia; what-  
‘ ever it is, you shall have it intirely at  
‘ your own disposal. Were you posselt  
‘ cf

‘ of millions, they would not bribe me  
‘ to marry you, if I did not love you :  
‘ and as I do love you to distraction,  
‘ had you not a farthing, you would be  
‘ to me an inestimable treasure. As to  
‘ Mrs. Acres, I will pay her the com-  
‘ pliment, my love, since you desire it :  
‘ but if she is so absurd as to think of  
‘ fortune, in competition with such a  
‘ lovely creature as you are, I shall no  
‘ longer look upon her as a relation.’

Sophia made use of a thousand arguments to induce him to behave, at least, with good manners to this lady, if she did not treat him altogether in the manner he liked. He promised to obey her, if she would also promise never to leave him again ; and upon receiving a favourable answer, sat down to write his necessary letters.

The next morning they all went to London, to Mr. Besfield’s, whom Sir William accosted with rapture, and informed him that he had gained his lovely Sophia’s consent. After this information,

tion, they were closetted together about settlements, &c. &c. while the ladies, at the same time, held a consultation about cloaths, &c. &c. Every person in the house, indeed, began to be in a bustle, except poor Juliet.

Mr. Besfield had acquainted Sophia with the addresses of Mr. Somers, and his proposals, in a letter; but he had not said any thing about Juliet's repugnance to the match. Sophia, therefore, in a most friendly manner, was congratulating her cousin upon her conquest, without imagining that she thereby gave her pain instead of pleasure. Juliet burst into tears, and said, ' So far, my dear  
' Sophia, from looking upon what you  
' and all my relations think so advantageous for me, really so, I have  
' treated my uncle and aunt—but they  
' will not listen to me—not to encourage Mr. Somers, for I cannot love  
' him. I do not wish to be married.  
' I had much rather remain as I am.'

Sophia,

Sophia, who had for a long time experienced so much uneasiness in trying to make her inclination comply with her duty, and who, with all her gratitude and good-nature, rather suffered than enjoyed the endearments of her lover, felt all the force of Juliet's infelicity; and after having said a thousand kind things to comfort her, promised to take an opportunity to speak to her uncle Besfield in her behalf.

Mrs. Besfield was so very loth to let Miss West see Sir William that day, that she sent her to dine with her aunt Greville, who was still in town; and Sophia, as she thought it proper to acquaint that lady a little with her affairs, accompanied her; but returned after a short visit to her impatient lover, who, the moment he missed her, grew restless, and remained so till her arrival.

They rolled back again to Windsor after dinner, as the roads were fine, the days long, and Sir William's bays the swiftest in England. His dear Sophia  
sat

fat in his lap all the way down, and he felt himself the happiest of men. She also felt herself the happiest of women, for her uncle had informed her how extremely generous Sir William had shewn himself in ordering the settlements; by which a very ample provision was made for her private expences during his life, and by which a very large jointure would devolve to her if she survived him.

When they arrived at Windsor in the evening, he desired her to tell him what she had been doing towards the happy day. The pictures, said he, are gone to be copied, and all other matters in my department, are in a fair way to be accelerated.

She communicated in return, what preparations she had been making; and then, in a most engaging manner, expressed her acknowledgments for all his favours. He interrupted her in the midst of them, and would not allow her to be under any obligations to him.

‘ I am

‘ I am not in the least intitled, my dear  
‘ Sophia, to these acknowledgments;  
‘ what you call favours, I consider as  
‘ debts. I am the obliged person, and  
‘ it is my duty to be grateful for the  
‘ tender and compassionate sensations  
‘ which you have felt on my account,  
‘ and which I shall remember, as I  
‘ ought, to the last moment of my life.’

The next morning, while Miss Fanbrook was employed in regulating some things in her own apartment, which were to be removed to Mount Acres, to which place they proposed to set out in a few days, she saw a coach and six drive up to the door, and an old lady get out of it, with great difficulty, attended by an elderly woman, who appeared rather like an humble companion, than an upper servant. As she supposed this lady might be an old friend of Mrs. Romney's, she left the window, and went on with what had before engaged her attention.

Mrs. Romney was sitting alone in the parlour at that instant, and somewhat surprized to hear the servant, after a violent rap, announce Mrs. Acres. She rose to receive her, as they had often met each other at the late Sir William's; but upon her advancing towards her, with great civility, was astonished to see the old lady turn from her with the most violent marks of anger in her countenance, and to hear her say to her servant, 'I asked if Sir William was at home.' The fellow bowed respectfully, and said, if she pleased, he would go and let him know that she was there. 'Tell him to come directly, replied she 'hastily, for I shall not find myself very 'easy in the company of one from whom 'I have received the greatest of all injuries.'

This last speech was accompanied with a disdainful look levelled at Mrs. Romney, who felt herself not extremely easy neither just at that moment, as she had not been accustomed to be affronted in  
her

her own house: accosting, therefore, Mrs. Acres with a polite but determined air, ‘ If you mean me, madam, said she, I am quite at a loss to know what injury I have done you, and what you complain of.’

‘ What! cried Mrs. Acres, with an inflamed face, and transported with passion, have you not seduced my nephew Sir William, and brought him acquainted with a little paltry, low-bred, girl, of no family, or at least of an extraction that she herself must blush to acknowledge, without a shilling in the world, without a single accomplishment, nay even without one good quality; with nothing, in short, but scandal and rags for her portion?—And have you not introduced this little infamous wretch into the very house with him?—And can you pretend ignorance after all this?’

Sir William, who had heard every syllable of this furious speech from the next room, in which he was writing,

flew almost through the door, and hurrying up to his incensed aunt, ‘ Good  
‘ heavens! madam, said he, what can  
‘ you mean by all these monstrous in-  
‘ vectives against the most amiable and  
‘ accomplished of women, and to whom  
‘ I am just going to be united by the  
‘ strictest ties of love and honour? I  
‘ gave you notice yesterday of my in-  
‘ tentions, and you may believe that  
‘ your behaviour upon this occasion fills  
‘ me with astonishment. How can you  
‘ reconcile your treatment of Mrs. Rom-  
‘ ney in her own house, with the com-  
‘ mon duties of politeness? She has  
‘ nothing to do with my engagements:  
‘ they are founded upon the most in-  
‘ violable attachment to the most  
‘ amiable woman in the world; a wo-  
‘ man, who, if you ever have the hap-  
‘ piness of becoming acquainted with  
‘ her, will make you blush for having  
‘ loaded her with those injurious epithets  
‘ which just now shocked my ears:  
‘ Epithets which, neither from her fa-  
‘ mily, person, and character, she de-  
‘ serves to receive from any-body, and  
‘ which

‘ which are particularly injurious from  
‘ you. By the manner of your expres-  
‘ sing yourself, I am almost led to  
‘ imagine that you did not receive my  
‘ letter; if you did, you must have been  
‘ before its arrival miserably prejudiced  
‘ by some wretch (here he threw a  
‘ fierce look on the waiting-gentlewo-  
‘ man) who wants to set your family in  
‘ an odious light, in order to make ad-  
‘ vantage of your credulity.’

While he uttered the latter part of this speech, his eyes sparkled with anger, and his action added considerable strength to all his words.

The good-natured Mrs. Romney, who thought it much more prudent to endeavour to compromise this affair, and to bring the old lady over to their party, if possible, notwithstanding the insult she had met with from her, said, ‘ Come, Sir William, be pacified, and persuade Mrs. Acres to sit down and take a dish of chocolate; when she knows the purport of your letter, which I dare

‘ say did not come to her hands, or which  
‘ she had not read through if it did,  
‘ and sees the amiable Miss Fanbrook,  
‘ I will venture to say that she will have  
‘ no reason to be dissatisfied with your  
‘ choice.’

‘ I will not expose my lovely Sophia,  
‘ cried he hastily, to her passion, upon  
‘ any terms.’

‘ Well, well, compose yourself, Sir  
‘ William, replied she, and assist me in  
‘ relating to your aunt every thing cir-  
‘ cumstantially, that has passed between  
‘ you and Miss Fanbrook; and then she  
‘ will soon be convinced that I have not  
‘ acted the part of a seducer.’

Sir William with some difficulty agreed to this; and it was also with some difficulty that they could make the old lady at first controul her angry passion, and listen to them. But she soon became calm and attentive.

Just

Just as Sir William arrived to that period of his narrative, where Sophia had, by her kind return, restored him to health, at which part of his narrative his aunt began to be softened, the parlour door suddenly opened, and a figure exquisitely genteel, dressed with the most elegant simplicity, with the most noble yet winning grace in her aspect and manner, appeared. Mrs. Acres, taking her to be one of Mrs. Romney's neighbours, as she knew that many people of fashion had dwellings near her, rose up and prepared to pay her all due respect. Sophia, imagining that the lady she had observed from her window had finished her visit, came down to make enquiries after Sir William. She started at her disappointment, and was going to retire, with a sweet confusion, after having made a great many apologies to Mrs. Romney for her intrusion.

Sir William ran to her, and not knowing whether his aunt would receive her in the manner he would have her, without which manner he was determined

she should never be acquainted with her, took hold of her hand, and said, ‘ Come along with me, my love, I have a thousand things to say to you.’

When they were just got out of the parlour, Mrs. Acres, in a tone very different from that with which she first addressed Mrs. Romney, said, with a look of surprize, ‘ Is that the young lady we have been speaking about, madam?’

‘ Yes, madam, replied Mrs. Romney, that young lady is Miss Fanbrook, with whom I am sure you will be charmed, when you have an opportunity to be acquainted with her great merit.’

‘ She is an exceeding fine woman indeed, said Mrs. Acres, I took her for a young lady of quality.’

‘ Pray, Sir William, said Mrs. Romney aloud, bring in Miss Fanbrook, your aunt Acres wishes to salute her.’

Though

Though this salutation was a little premature, and though the old lady was drawn into it by surprize, she could not well refuse it when it had been proposed to her in such a manner. Mrs. Romney, seeing her rather embarrassed, went to the door, and opening it, cried, ‘ Come, come, Sir William, you keep your aunt standing ;’ for Mrs. Acres had risen up again, expecting the entrance of her future niece.

When Sir William led in his lovely Sophia, blushing and trembling, she was received with that sort of civility which is inseparable from age, especially from age apprehensive of being imposed upon. However, the modest diffidence and the innumerable graces of Sophia, with a strong desire to please, which is generally, though not always, successful, soon gained upon Mrs. Acres, who, before she left Windsor, was entirely brought over to her interest, not only by the striking proofs she saw of her intrinsic merit, but by the excessive tenderness with which she was treated by

her nephew, of whom she was truly very fond.

Mrs. Romney, before the departure of Mrs. Acres, enquired much after the state of her health, as she had heard from Sir William that she had been very ill. She told her that she had had a long fit of sickness, and upon growing a little better, had been sent to Bath by her physicians, from which place she was but just returned, or should have been with her nephew before.

As some people wanted to see Sir William upon business, he went out to speak to them in the next room. Sophia slipped out after him, and begged him to ask his aunt to be of their party to Mount Acres. He pressed her hand, by way of approbation, and she returned to her chair.

As soon as he had dispatched the people who wanted him, he came into the parlour again; and after having shot a glance of the tenderest regard at his Sophia,

phia, gave his aunt Acres a pressing invitation to meet them at his seat, to which she, who had long desired to enjoy a little of her nephew's company, consented.

Mrs. Romney then begged the favour of Mrs. Acres to spend a day with her at Windsor before they went. This request being also complied with, before Sir William put her into her coach, she made a polite apology to Mrs. Romney, for her vehement behaviour, as she called it, whom she condescended to thank for her kind care of her nephew in his illness; and then taking an affectionate leave of Miss Fanbrook, telling her that Sophia was a name which had a great deal of dignity in it, and that she had been intimate with several lady Sophia's, who became countesses and dutchesses, got into her carriage.

As soon as the old lady was driven from the door, Sir William, enraptured with Sophia's behaviour to his aunt, and the effect which it had produced, could

hardly find words sufficient to express his thanks and commendations.

‘ To be sure, madam, said he to Mrs. Romney, pressing Sophia to his bosom, there never was such a bewitching angel, possessed of such various powers of charming. Dear, dear Sophia, continued he to her, how extravagantly I adore you!’

Sophia said she should be vastly happy, if she had succeeded in trying to please Mrs. Acres. ‘ As for you, my dear Sir William, continued she, smiling at his transports, you are so very, very partial to me, that I begin to be of my uncle Besfield’s opinion, and am half afraid that you will spoil me’.

This lively, as well as affectionate speech gave the sincerest satisfaction to Sir William, who believed that it arose entirely from a tranquility of her mind, to which she had, ever since he had known her, been a stranger.

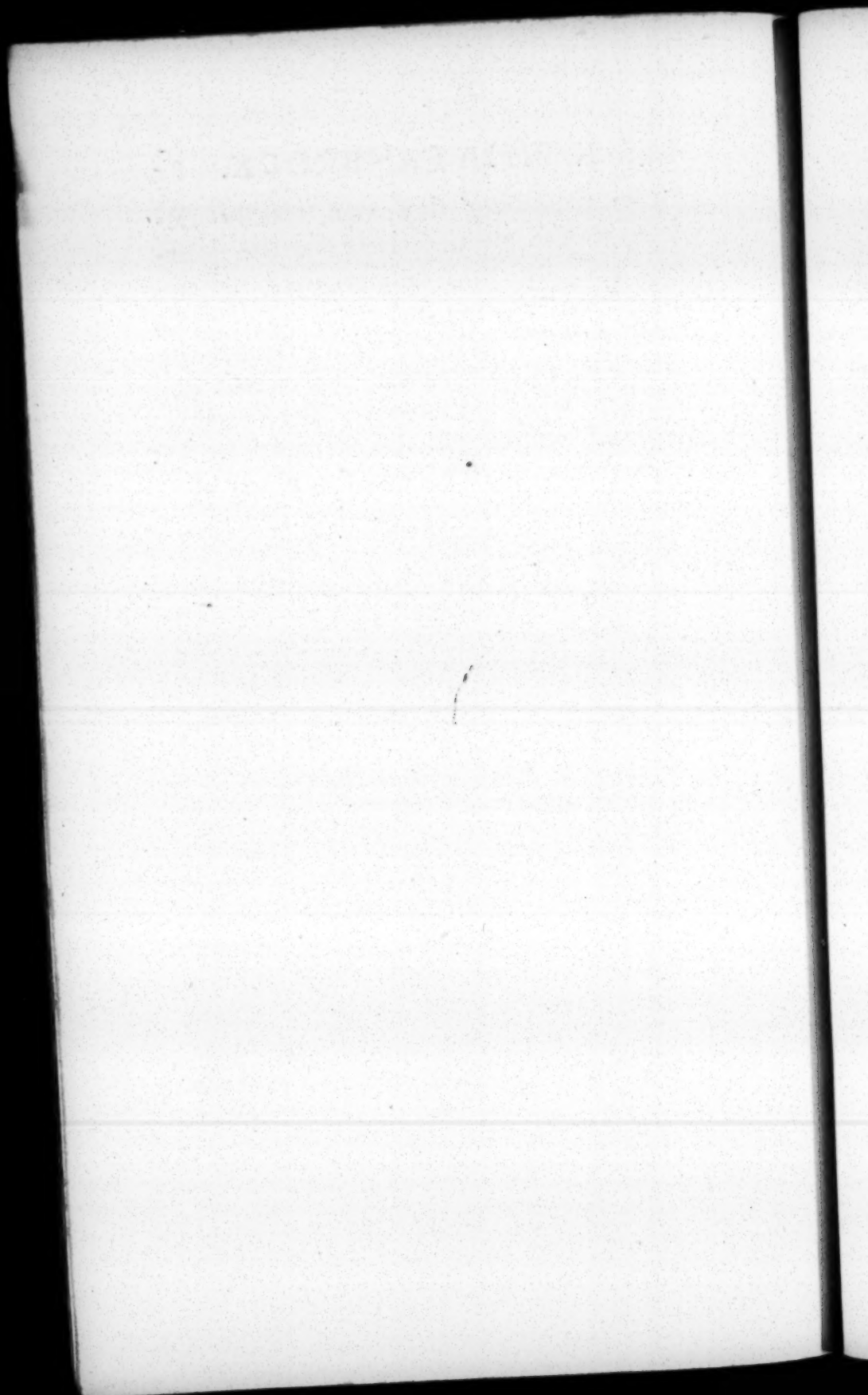
The

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The following day was totally devoted to the preparations for the journey; and on that before their departure, Mrs. Acres came to dine with them, according to her invitation, but very prudently, without her female attendant, whose company she rightly imagined would not be acceptable to her nephew, and whom she could not well desire to eat with his servants.

End of the FOURTH BOOK.

T H E



T H E  
H I S T O R Y  
O F  
Mifs SOPHIA FANBROOK.  
B O O K V.

**A**S Sir William had that morning, the weather being particularly inviting, engaged Sophia to take a turn with him in the park, they were not ready to receive Mrs. Acres, for she came early. Mrs. Romney,

ney, therefore, received her alone, and soon took an opportunity to vindicate herself with regard to her having any designs upon Sir William; assuring Mrs. Acres, that if she had observed the least propensity in him towards any woman of mean extraction or low breeding, tho' of undoubted virtue, and with the best disposition in the world, she should have been the first to have kept such a person from having any connections with him.

‘ But, continued she, when I knew that  
‘ he had not lived quite free from the  
‘ vices so commonly pursued by young  
‘ men of fashion, I was not a little pleased, I confess, to see him so thoroughly  
‘ engrossed by the merit of Miss Fanbrook; a woman every way qualified  
‘ to work a total reformation in his conduct: and as Sir William is possessed  
‘ of so large an estate, the manners of  
‘ a companion for life are of more consequence than her fortune.’

As Mrs. Acres could not urge any thing to controvert Mrs. Romney's opinion, the two ladies soon began to be

be upon an amicable footing, to which the presence of Sophia, who in a short time made her appearance, not a little contributed.

Sir William, when he called for his things to dress, found among them the ruffles which Sophia had worked for him: Mrs. Romney ordered them to be given to him that day, and as he had been kept quite ignorant of her intentions, he was the more agreeably surprized. He hurried down to thank her for this mark of her regard, without seeing his aunt Mrs. Acres, or any thing but Sophia. ‘ Now, my angel, cried he, I  
‘ begin to flatter myself, that my perpetual endeavours to please will at length  
‘ make an impression on that dear tender bosom, since you esteem me  
‘ enough to think of me when I am  
‘ absent; and that I do not vainly flatter  
‘ myself this elegant work, performed  
‘ by these dear fingers, is a convincing  
‘ proof.’

Mrs.

Mrs. Acres admired also the fancy of the pattern, and the taste with which it was filled up; and the day was spent by this little party in a manner extremely agreeable to them all.

When the morning came on which they were to set out, Sir William's post-chariot was at the door very early. He handed his aunt Romney and Sophia into it, and mounted his horse in order to accompany them, but commanded his servants to attend the carriage, to shew his beloved Miss Fanbrook the greater respect. An elegant dinner was prepared for them on the road, and in the evening they arrived at Mount Acres.

Mount Acres was a large old mansion house, delightfully situated on the declivity of an hill, by which it was sheltered from the severe sharpness of a north-east wind: it was consequently open to the south, but a little skreened from the west by a grove of towering elms, which, as the summer was now at its height, appeared

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appeared in all their beauty. The prospect from the front of the house, which was built with stone, in the Gothic style of architecture, was both extensive and attracting. The gardens were spacious, and as Sir William's father was a great improver, as well as excessively fond of horticulture, they were laid out by him in the modern taste.

Sir William welcomed his lovely Sophia to the seat of his ancestors with raptures; and she, who was naturally inclined to a country life, expressed much pleasure at the agreeable appearance of the house and gardens, and thereby gave him infinite satisfaction.

While they were walking over the park and gardens, the next day, Mrs. Acres arrived. Sir William being informed that she was in the drawing-room, begged Mrs. Romney to go and entertain her, till he had conducted his Sophia to every part of the garden, that she might give her opinion, with regard to some alterations which he thought  
would

would make it still more agreeable to her taste. But as he stopped every moment to tell her that every thing she saw was hers, and should ever be at her command, as she was the sole mistress of his heart and all his possessions, they made but a slow progress towards the house.

Sophia, who thought that they did not by such lingering treat Mrs. Acres with proper respect, desired Sir William to let her go with Mrs. Romney, to receive that lady. He immediately complied with her request: the slightest hint from his Sophia made him fly to obey her.

Sophia, flattered by the vast attention which he paid to her—Where is the woman who would not have been pleased in such a situation?—strove to make him satisfied, both with himself and her; and as she had gone too far to look upon herself in any other light than one who was very soon to be his wife, she behaved to him with more respect and tenderness,

derness, than she had ever thought herself obliged to discover before. By so doing, she gave a new spirit to his endearments, and drew from him increasing acknowledgments: and as her behaviour had put him into the best humour in the world, he received his aunt Acres with very unusual marks of affection and regard.

In the presence of his aunt Acres and Mrs. Romney, Sir William opened his mother's cabinet of jewels, and offering them to Sophia, begged to be favoured with her directions to have them new set, in the most elegant and fashionable manner. She modestly replied, that as she should wear them merely out of respect to him, she intreated him to add to the obligations he was continually laying her under, by regulating her fancy according to his own taste, which, she knew, must be vastly superior to her's, because she had been but little acquainted with ornaments of such value.

The

The useful furniture, and all the decorations for the apartments, were next brought under her inspection. She pleaded strongly for the continuance of every thing, which was no otherwise faulty than in being unfashionable. The veneration with which she looked upon all the antique moveables, had a wonderful effect upon Mrs. Acres, who, being far advanced in life, had a very natural tendency to admire what was in fashion when she herself was a young woman. Mrs. Acres, therefore, cried up Sophia's taste and judgment; and Sir William was highly pleased to see the rapid progress she made towards his aunt's favour. But he was at the same time afraid that she had, in giving her opinion, concealed her real sentiments, out of complaisance to Mrs. Acres. In consequence of this apprehension, when they were by themselves, he pressed her to give her sentiments freely, with regard to every thing, and begged that she would not let her judgment be biassed by any body.

In

In a day or two after they came down, the neighbouring families paid their compliments, among which there were some of great distinction. Every gentleman regarded Sophia with particular attention, after the first civilities were over; but the ladies, especially the younger part of them, did not seem to approve quite so much of a young person who made no small advances to rivalship, on many occasions. It was, indeed, a little mortifying to most of them, who, from the gentility of their birth, and the splendor of their fortunes, had very fair pretensions to Sir William, to see how prodigiously assiduous he was to make himself agreeable to Sophia, a girl, in both these respects, so much inferior to them. They concealed, however, under the mask of dissimulation, the uneasiness which this partial preference gave them; and as they were, in compliance with the maxims of their sex, loth to acknowledge their own deficiency in the art of pleasing, or at least to own that another was mistress of it, they comforted themselves that Sir Wil-

liam's assiduities to Sophia, arose entirely from prejudices in her favour; and that her person was too indifferent to stir up the slightest emotions of envy in their breasts.

Among the young ladies who comforted themselves in this manner, there was a lively girl, whom Sir William had been used to distinguish from the rest; but the distinction with which he honoured her, was not of that kind which has any thing to do with the heart. This lively girl, however, by the force of imagination, saw a great deal more in his behaviour to her, than he really meant. She was absolutely vain of the notice he had taken of her, and flattered herself that she had address enough to make him return to his former familiarity with her, which never went farther than a romping-bout, or a game at battledore and shuttle-cock, wherein she excelled most of her companions. Full of self-sufficiency, therefore, she began to treat him in the free and easy style, without the least ceremony: but per-

6           ceiving

ceiving that her freedoms had not the desired effect upon him, she claimed his promise of a ball, to the performance of which, she said, she had a right, as a whole year had passed since he had made it.

Sir William, with the most petrifying indifference, replied, that he could not recollect any such promise. ‘ I am  
‘ now, said he, engaged to offer a ball  
‘ to that lady (bowing to Miss Fan-  
‘ brook) for her entertainment; if she  
‘ will do me the honour to accept of it, I  
‘ hope all the ladies present will favour  
‘ me with their company, and I will  
‘ send cards to the rest of my ac-  
‘ quaintance.’

Sophia returned his bow with a blush of assent, while the young coquette, who felt herself very much hurt by the turn which Sir William had given to the claim she made of his promise, in favour of her rival, coloured with indignation.

The company, according to invitation, all met at Sir William's; and as there were many people of real fashion among them, they were taken out to dance agreeable to their rank.

Among the gentlemen who composed this genteel assembly, there was one who had been the gayest of Sir William's companions in his looser hours. He had been out of England for some months, on a party with some intimate friends, and was returned home just time enough to accept of Sir William's invitation; consequently had heard nothing of his attachment to Miss Fanbrook, which now began to be pretty much the chat of Mount Acres and its environs.

Chance had that evening placed him near Sophia. As he was a very agreeable man in his air, person, and appearance; nor less so in his address and conversation, and full of vivacity, he almost obliged her to listen to him. He soon found that her conversation  
was

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was very entertaining, and distinguished her from the generality of her sex, became quite delighted with her, and desired her hand for the evening. She told him she was engaged. He expressed great concern at his coming too late to enjoy that happiness. ‘But certainly, madam, said he, you have not engaged yourself also for minuets? Give me leave’——

He proceeded with so much spirit and gallantry, that Sophia, who began to be embarrassed, and fearful lest her lover might be displeased with her receiving so much politeness from a stranger, looked very seriously. At this embarrassing moment, Sir William, who had been placing some of his fair guests, joined them. ‘Ah! Belmont, cried he, where have you been all this time? I sent to your house, without knowing whether you was returned.’

‘And you have done me a particular pleasure, Sir William, replied he, for which I thank you; but you will

‘ make me still more indebted to you,  
‘ by persuading this lady to be my part-  
‘ ner for the evening, as I find I have  
‘ not rhetoric enough to procure her  
‘ consent. For heaven’s sake, Acres,  
‘ continued he, taking him aside, who  
‘ is this lovely girl you have got  
‘ here? You know I am not apt to be  
‘ soon taken in, but faith, there is some-  
‘ thing of a *je ne sçai quoi* about her that  
‘ is altogether irresistible. Do, pri-  
‘ thee, stand my friend, and get her  
‘ for me.’

‘ ‘Get her for you?’ said Sir William,  
gravely.

‘ Ay, ay, to dance with me to night,  
‘ I mean—L-d! what a formal face  
‘ dost thou put on about it!’

‘ Miss Fanbrook, replied Sir Wil-  
‘ liam, fixing his eyes upon her, to see  
‘ how she liked Belmont, commands en-  
‘ tirely here.’

‘ ‘ Why

‘Why ay,’ answered Belmont, surveying them both with a curious eye, as if he thought there was something mystical in their behaviour, ‘the lady tells me that she is engaged—but you know, for a minuet—’ ‘Death! Acres, I believe I have it; she is certainly engaged to yourself—by Jove you are a lucky devil.’

Sophia, who could not avoid overhearing now and then part of their conversation, cast a glance at Sir William which made him perfectly happy. He convinced her how well he understood the full meaning of it, by taking her hand in a manner which plainly proved that they were no strangers to each other; and looking at her with eyes overflowing with joy, to find her so universally admired, said to her in the tenderest tone, ‘Is it for me, my Sophia, that you have kept yourself disengaged?’

‘Certainly, replied she smiling, if you will accept of me.’

‘Accept of thee said he!’ pressing the hand which he held, and scarce able to conceal the raptures which he felt, at this public mark of the preference she gave him, which called up blushes in her cheeks.

Belmont now clearly perceived that it was time for him to retreat. He was, notwithstanding, so extremely charmed with her elegant figure and her amiable behaviour, that whenever they met during the dances, he could not help letting her see how much he admired her. She received all his marks of admiration with a reserved civility, and paid no particular attention to any man but Sir William, who was so respectfully tender, and discovered so much anxiety for fear she should be too much fatigued, feel too much heat or too much cold, that every woman in the room began to hate them both heartily; the more so, as every man in it shewed the highest approbation of Sophia’s conduct, who, with an elegant simplicity of manners, discovered the utmost indifference

ference to the gallantries she excited, and received all her lover's assiduities with such a modest deference, that he was every moment more and more captivated with her.

As Sophia had not been long recovered from her illness, Sir William intreated her not to exhaust her spirits by dancing, and she soon retired to sit down. She was not so fond of that exercise as most ladies are, though she acquitted herself with the same grace which accompanied all her actions. If she had been ever so fond of it, the desire to comply with Sir William's every request, would have destroyed all other considerations.

By the side of Mrs. Romney and Mrs. Acres, Sir William seated her, and obliged her to let him throw an handkerchief over her, that she might not catch cold, and never quitted her a moment, but when good manners made it necessary for him to pay some civilities to the company which he had invited.

As they had sat up beyond their usual hour, they were not early risers on the next morning. Sir William, indeed, was stirring first; ever anxious, ever restless, when absent from his Sophia, he had no peace but in her presence. The several interruptions they had met with in the course of the day, hindered them from talking over the diversion of the preceeding night; but as the evening was remarkably fine, Sir William, after supper, asked his Sophia, if it would be agreeable to her to take a turn or two in her favourite walk, and enjoy the moon's bright serenity.

As Sophia always agreed to every thing which he proposed, she rose immediately, and was ready to attend him. Inclosing, therefore, her arm in his, they proceeded to a fine gravel-walk, with rows of tall limes on each side of it, which being in full bloom, perfumed the air around the stems, of which the woodbines twined their sweetly smelling blossoms. On the right hand of this walk was a little wilderness of flower-  
ing

ing shrubs, through which a number of serpentine paths occasioned a pleasing perplexity. The left hand was bounded by an eglantine hedge, in which damask roses were agreeably intermixed; over it was seen a near view of the park, and beyond that a far-distant and extensive prospect. The nightingales over their heads warbled out their love-lorn tales, and at the bottom of this fragrant alley there was a rustic bower, covered with various coloured jasmines, and all kinds of odoriferous and aromatic plants.

In this bower Sir William seated his dear Sophia; and with his fond arm round her lovely neck, to preserve her from the damps of the evening air, he asked her opinion of the preceding night's entertainment, and desired to know how she liked the company. She told him that she should always take a great deal of pleasure in trying to make herself agreeable to his friends; but assured him, that her chief satisfaction arose from his and her dear Mrs. Romney's company. ' Walking in the park

‘ and garden here, and strolling about  
‘ the country, continued she, music,  
‘ drawing, and above all, the constant  
‘ endeavour to deserve the very great  
‘ regard you have shewn for me, give  
‘ me far more true pleasure than the  
‘ mixed conversation of the most fa-  
‘ shionable crowd, from which seldom  
‘ arises much entertainment, and in  
‘ which we rarely meet with much sin-  
‘ cerity. From the few opportunities  
‘ which I have had of seeing what is  
‘ called *life*, I have observed, that peo-  
‘ ple associate together more from wea-  
‘ riness of themselves, than from a de-  
‘ sire to be either serviceable or enter-  
‘ taining to each other; and that my  
‘ own sex in particular, are fond of go-  
‘ ing about from place to place, rather  
‘ to exhibit their persons and their fine  
‘ cloaths, than to embellish their man-  
‘ ners, and improve their minds. As  
‘ this is my way of thinking, Sir Wil-  
‘ liam, you may be sure that while I  
‘ have your company, and am so happy  
‘ as not only to gain but deserve your  
‘ appro-

‘ approbation, I shall be extremely in-  
 ‘ different to the rest of the world.’

Sophia, though in the above speech she uttered her real sentiments, could not have succeeded better, if she had made Sir William’s inclination her sole study, in order to make a complete conquest of his heart. He listened to her, without interrupting her, till she had finished it, with the profoundest attention; and when she ceased to speak, with his eyes riveted to her face, cried,  
 ‘ And can you, my dear Sophia, you,  
 ‘ who are so formed to please; you, who  
 ‘ are still more capable of charming the  
 ‘ attention by the melody of your  
 ‘ voice, and the justness of your ex-  
 ‘ pressions, than any woman I ever met  
 ‘ with; can you, I say, so early in life,  
 ‘ give up the gay world and all its joys,  
 ‘ to shut yourself up in this retired spot  
 ‘ with a doating husband? Think  
 ‘ again, my love, and do not be too  
 ‘ hasty to resign what almost every wo-  
 ‘ man, especially in the prime season of  
 ‘ life, claims as her incontestible right, a

‘ right which no woman shall more freely  
‘ enjoy than my Sophia.’——

‘ And which no woman can less en-  
‘ joy than her, cried she. No, Sir Will-  
‘ liam, my ideas of perfect felicity, if  
‘ there is such a thing really existing  
‘ upon earth, are very different from  
‘ those of the generality of my sex. In  
‘ my poor opinion, it arises from the  
‘ regular performance of the domestic  
‘ duties, in their proper spheres, and in  
‘ the exertion of benevolence to every  
‘ human being. And if you will per-  
‘ mit me to appropriate the greatest  
‘ part of what your liberality has in-  
‘ tended to bestow upon me, towards  
‘ relieving the distresses of the wretched,  
‘ procuring medicines for the sick, al-  
‘ leviating the miseries of the aged, and  
‘ instructing the younger part of your  
‘ neighbourhood, I shall in time hope,  
‘ in some measure, to deserve the proofs  
‘ you give me, with the most refined  
‘ delicacy, of your beneficent disposition,  
‘ by putting it so largely in my power  
‘ to

‘ to be instrumental in conferring happiness on others. To be so employed will ever give me the sincerest delight ; for I always considered benevolence, like mercy, the darling attribute of heaven.’

‘ Most strongly do you confirm the justness of that noble sentiment, my dear Sophia, replied he, by the goodness of your heart. You raise me, by your elevated way of thinking, above all earthly felicity. I never, never thought, I should be thus supremely happy. In possessing you, my angel, for thou art indeed truly angelic, I shall not only be the happiest of men, but a much better creature than I had even dared to hope I should ever be. You have expanded my ideas, and thrown me into a new, a nobler train of thinking. I have been guilty of innumerable follies ; but I trust it is not too late to correct my errors ; with such a mistress I shall be a good man, as well as a most happy one.’

‘ Why,

‘Why, are you not such a man already?’ said she, with a sweet simplicity of countenance. ‘You are, in appearance, every thing I wish you to be; and surely you do not deceive me.’

‘Deceive thee! said he, no, thou lovely innocence, I never deceived thee; I would die first: but certainly, my Sophia, there is great room for amendment in us all, particularly in those who have had much commerce with the gay world, of which you have just given so lively and so faithful a description; and I am afraid, when I come to look into my own affairs, I shall find that I have, either through pride, idleness, or inattention, undesignedly occasioned many aching hearts among my neighbours and dependants. But be assured, my love, all these faults shall be amended, and by thy dear, thy bright example.’——

A little kind of rustling among the bushes in the park, made Sir William stop here, as he imagined that some of his

his domestics, over-hearing a conversation between him and Sophia, had stood to listen to it. He made a motion to her, for a moment's silence, and they then presently heard a female say, ' Indeed, Harry, I must go home now; if my mother should come to know that I have been at landlord's, she will be in a fiery passion, that she will.' This little speech, though uttered with a rustic accent, was nevertheless pronounced in a very pretty voice; and the moon soon discovered a genteelly-made country girl, with one of Sir William's footmen, who had her by the hand, and as they passed along, to quiet her apprehensions, replied, ' My dear Betsy, your mother need not be in fear of my master now; he is well employed at home; we shall have a lady Acres soon, and one of the sweetest-tempered women she is in the world.'

Sophia smiled at this speech with that sort of satisfaction which one always feels at hearing one's self praised, with an assurance that the praise bestowed  
upon

upon us comes sincerely from the heart of the speaker, free from all interested motives.

The raptures which Sir William felt, and would have expressed, on finding that he had fixed his heart upon an object in which he every moment discovered new beauties and virtues, an object universally agreeable, are really beyond description. But as his anxiety for her preservation was proportionable to the transports which her charms excited in him; and as the evening made quick approaches, he hastened her return to the house, during which she interrupted his fond effusions, by asking him who Betsy was, and whether she was handsome. She asked this question in a very arch manner, and seemed to be rather inclined to rally him a little. But Sir William, quite grave, declared upon his honour, that he was not conscious of having ever seen Betsy before.

When

When they came into the parlour, she affected to keep up her suspicions, telling Mrs. Romney, with a laughing tone, that she did not believe a single syllable of what Sir William said; ‘He was certainly, madam, continued she, well acquainted with his tenant’s daughter, though he pretended so much ignorance about her.’

As her excessive chearfulness upon this occasion, convinced Sir William that she had only a mind to divert the ladies at his expence, he laughed also in his turn; but at length said, with a very serious countenance, ‘I would give the world, my Sophia, that you were a little jealous.’ ‘And why so, my dear Sir William?’ said she. ‘I should then, replied he, be sure that you loved me.’

‘And are you not yet sure of me?’ ‘Believe me, Sir William, jealousy is not always a proof of love. Suspicion is implied in jealousy, and no man can love a woman whom he suspects.’ ‘If

‘ If that woman were a Sophia, cried he, not to doat on her would be impossible. O, madam, continued he, to Mrs. Romney, if you had but heard this sweet girl just now in the arbour, you would agree with me, that nothing but the most stupid insensibility could have prevented my adoring her, and that nothing can ever make me happy without her.’

‘ Well, well, replied Sophia, smiling at him, I shall to-morrow have a trial of your constancy ; for I will find out this Betsy, and if you have not yet seen her, you positively shall, for I dare say she is very handsome.’

Accordingly the next morning she waked Mrs. Romney very early, and asked her if she would rise and accompany her in a walk about the village before breakfast. Her good-natured friend, who always took a pleasure in obliging her, was particularly ready on this occasion to comply with her request, as the scheme she proposed so exactly fell in

in with her own taste, rose directly, and they set out long before Sir William was stirring. Sophia having asked the servant who attended her to her apartment the evening before, a few questions which led to an information about the above-mentioned young girl whom she had seen in the park, procured intelligence which served to direct her to the very spot where she lived. By that intelligence, therefore, having found it, she, under pretence of making some enquiries about the inhabitants of the place, entered into chat with the girl's grand-mother. Betsy and her mother had just stepped out.

The old dame, after abundance of curtsies and civilities in her well-meant way, asked them to walk in and sit down to rest themselves. Sophia and Mrs. Romney accepting of her good-natured invitation, found every thing very neat and clean in her cottage. 'What, you  
' comes from the hall-house, ladies, I  
' suppose, said she. I remember ma-  
' dam Romney, she used to be down  
' now

‘ now and then, in my old lady’s time;  
‘ and I used to be backward and forward,  
‘ ward, to and again, to look after her  
‘ ladyship’s pheasants, because as how  
‘ she thought I understood them. Ay,  
‘ she was a good lady; I hope she is in  
‘ a better place now; though to be  
‘ sure, there is not a finer seat in all the  
‘ country than Mount Acres: but we  
‘ must all go one time or other; I am  
‘ very old myself, eighty-four, madam,  
‘ and can but just crawl about;  
‘ but poor folks must walk as long as  
‘ they can.’

‘ Well, dame, but you have got a  
‘ daughter, said Sophia, and a granddaughter  
‘ daughter to work for you, now you are  
‘ grown old.’

‘ Ay, lack-a-day, cried she, but my  
‘ daughter has got a young family to  
‘ bring up and tend; then we have a  
‘ cow and pigs, and poultry, to look  
‘ after.’

‘ Methinks,

‘ Methinks, said Sophia, your grand-  
‘ daughter is old enough for a good  
‘ service; why don’t you get her into  
‘ Sir William’s family?’

‘ Ah! the L-d blefs your dear face,  
‘ replied the old woman, why that would  
‘ be pretty indeed. I find you doesn’t  
‘ know our landlord;—law—law—why  
‘ he is the very devil and all at a pretty  
‘ girl; and to be sure our Betsy is a  
‘ likely lass, though I say it. L-d, ma-  
‘ dam, why we are forced to shut in  
‘ all our young women, whenever he is  
‘ down.’

Sophia was ready to laugh out at the  
old woman’s account of her lover, and  
did not dare to look once towards Mrs.  
Romney, but putting on a very serious  
face, replied, ‘ Ay, indeed! that is a sad  
‘ character you give Sir William—well,  
‘ but I hope he is a good landlord?’

‘ Pretty well, said she; if he overlook-  
‘ ed things himself a little more, and  
‘ did not leave so much to that steward  
‘ of

‘ of his, it would be better for his poor  
 ‘ tenants. But, madam, I hope you  
 ‘ won’t speak of what I have been  
 ‘ saying to you; we all love Sir Wil-  
 ‘ liam very much, and if he should be  
 ‘ angry with me for speaking my mind,  
 ‘ why he may turn my son-in-law out of  
 ‘ his farm, and then we must all go to  
 ‘ the parish.’

‘ Don’t be afraid of me, my good  
 ‘ woman, said Sophia, taking out her  
 ‘ purse, I will be your friend, and speak  
 ‘ to Sir William for you; and pray let  
 ‘ your grand-daughter come to the hall,  
 ‘ and enquire for Mrs. Romney; I will  
 ‘ answer for him, you need not be un-  
 ‘ der any apprehension on his account.’

She then rose up to go, first giving  
 the old woman a crown, which filled her  
 honest heart with so much joy, that she  
 desired leave to stop them a moment,  
 while she prayed heaven to shower  
 down blessings on that sweet young  
 lady’s head. And then she said, she  
 wished Betsy would come home, because  
 she

she was a tight clean girl, and she believed madam would like her looks.

‘ She might, continued she, be very well married to Harry, one of Sir William’s men, who has been her sweet-heart ever so long; and they might do very well, if his uncle, who was Sir William’s game-keeper, would give his consent; but truly, because he has got a little money, he is so proud, that he won’t let his nephew marry a girl with nothing, though she is ever so good.’

‘ Well, replied Sophia, and is Harry a good-natured sober fellow, and does Betsy like him?’

‘ Yes, yes, said the old woman, he is a very sober young man, and Betsy cannot chuse but like him, for he has been very constant to her indeed.’

Sophia was much pleased with the plain manner in which the loquacious old woman told her tale, and was bidding

ding her good-morrow, when Betsey appeared.

Betsey was a tall genteel girl, about eighteen or nineteen, with a very pretty modest look. Her grand-mother acquainted her immediately with Sophia's goodness; and the young woman, behaving with great respect, promised to wait on her at Mount Acres. Sophia then taking her dear Mrs. Romney by the arm, tripped home to meet Sir William at breakfast.

When they returned, they could not find him in any of the rooms below. Mrs. Acres told them, that he had made many enquiries after Miss Fanbrook, and that on being informed she was gone out, he went in search of her.

This intelligence gave a little check to the mirthful air with which Sophia came home prepared to accost him, because she feared that he might weary himself in looking for her to no purpose : but she had soon the satisfaction to see him

him enter the room, though somewhat out of breath.

‘ So, my lovely fugitive, said he,  
 ‘ seizing her hand, you have been ramb-  
 ‘ ling, I find, this morning ; but I hope  
 ‘ the exercise has done you good, my  
 ‘ life : you have a charming colour, con-  
 ‘ tinued he, gazing at her passionately ;  
 ‘ the whole village is up in arms, about  
 ‘ a fine young lady, the best creature in  
 ‘ the world, who has given dame Dob-  
 ‘ bins a crown piece.’

‘ You see, madam, said Sophia laugh-  
 ‘ ing, to Mrs. Acres, at how trifling an  
 ‘ expence I have purchased a good cha-  
 ‘ racter.’

‘ Why really, answered Sir William,  
 ‘ if a good character is to be bought at  
 ‘ so reasonable a rate, one would, I  
 ‘ think, never be without it. But it  
 ‘ was not the money merely, my angel ;  
 ‘ it was thy sweet attracting person, and  
 ‘ thy engaging affability, which oblige  
 ‘ every body to love thee. Oh, Sophia,  
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‘ what an inestimable blessing art thou  
‘ then to me !’

‘ Indeed, my dear Sir William, re-  
‘ plied she, I shall be the very vainest  
‘ of all human beings, if you praise me  
‘ so extravagantly. Besides, you don’t  
‘ tell me how you like Betsy.’ ‘ I have  
‘ not seen her,’ cried he. ‘ Then I do  
‘ not know, said she laughing, as the  
‘ girl is so handsome, and as you pass  
‘ for so dangerous a man in the neigh-  
‘ bourhood, whether I ought to trust you  
‘ with the sight of her. How would  
‘ you advise me to act, madam? conti-  
‘ nued she to Mrs. Acres. Mrs. Rom-  
‘ ney knows she is vastly pretty.’

Sir William, though he was very much delighted to see Sophia in such high spirits, was also much perplexed with a word or two which she had dropped, though in raillery. He was afraid she might have heard something to his disadvantage, which might affect her, though she endeavoured to conceal her disquietude under a gaiety of behaviour.

haviour. He therefore sat silent, with his eyes tenderly fixed on her, to see if he could, by dint of penetration, discover whether she was really as easy in her mind as she appeared to be. And though from the closest observation, he found no reason to be alarmed, yet, as anxiety is inseparable from love, and as his love was of the most violent kind, he could neither partake of the breakfast nor the conversation. His taciturnity and want of appetite, gave Sophia an opportunity to continue her raillery: she told him he was thinking of the pretty country maid. He now grew absolutely serious, and cried, ‘ I swear to  
 ‘ you, my dear Sophia, by this soft  
 ‘ hand, there is not a woman in the  
 ‘ universe, let her rank, fortune, person,  
 ‘ and accomplishments, be ever so engaging, on whom I would bestow a  
 ‘ single thought but yourself. You are  
 ‘ the only one I ever loved; I never  
 ‘ will, I never can, love any other.  
 ‘ With you I hope to spend my days,  
 ‘ with the exquisite satisfaction of making, and of beholding you, happy; and

‘ should I be disappointed, which heaven forbid, I shall have nothing further to do in this world: life will then have no comfort for me; existence will be a torment.’

As he pronounced these last words with some difficulty, Sophia thought that what she had intended for his diversion, had taken an opposite turn. She assured him that she never had the least reason to doubt either his tenderness or his truth; and then informed him of the history of his tenant’s daughter, with so many graces, and expatiated so much on the merits of Betsy, her passion for Harry, and his disinterested affection for her, that Sir William was quite transported at the relation of her little narrative, and urged her to repeat those parts of it in which she expressed her pity for the lovers. She complied without the least hesitation, and when she had finished the repetition of them, he said, ‘ And will it give my tender sympathizing love any degree of pleasure

‘ to make these two young people  
‘ happy ?’

‘ It will give me a great deal of  
‘ pleasure to see you make them so, Sir  
‘ William, replied she.’

‘ No, my good Sophia, said he, as  
‘ you first found out their distress, it is  
‘ highly proper that your gentle hand  
‘ should raise them to felicity.’ When  
he had thus spoken, he went into the next  
room, which was his library, from which  
he immediately returned with a rich poc-  
ket-book, filled with several bank notes.  
‘ There, my angel, said he, presenting  
‘ it to her, I beg you would condescend  
‘ to become my almoner, and distribute  
‘ these notes in what proportion your  
‘ excellent judgment and feeling heart  
‘ shall direct you.’

Sophia blushed; but she blushed with  
delight, to see how he almost prevented  
every wish. After paying her gratitude  
to him in the most amiable manner:  
‘ But Sir William, said she, it is rather

‘ too soon for me yet to take this agree-  
‘ able office upon me; be so kind in  
‘ return then, to keep this treasure for  
‘ me, and also to assist me in finding out  
‘ proper objects to share your generous  
‘ bounty, which warms my heart to  
‘ esteem you more than ever.’

He caught her in his arms, and pressing her to his fond bosom, ‘ Then let  
‘ me prevail on you, my amiable So-  
‘ phia, said he, to give me a still stronger  
‘ proof of the esteem you bless me  
‘ with, by hastening the preparation for  
‘ that day, which is to make you for  
‘ ever mine.’

As she could no longer refuse to comply with this request, they agreed to set out for Mrs. Romney’s in the following week, as they were to be married at Windsor, and then return to Mount Acres.

This important affair being settled, Sir William, in return for her complaisance, ordered Harry into his library,  
and

and questioning him about his mistress, found his story agreed so exactly with that which goody Dobbins had related to Sophia, that he asked him how much money his uncle expected him to have with a wife. The poor fellow, quite confounded with his master's interrogations, at last replied, that his uncle would fain have had him marry farmer Brushwood's daughter, because she had fifty pounds; but that he could not fancy her, as she was not good tempered. Sir William smiled, and bid him follow him into the parlour, in which Sophia was talking to Betsy, who came according to her order, and coloured excessively at the sight of Harry.

‘ These are the young people, madam, said he to Sophia, whom you wished to make happy. Do me the favour to take out what you think proper to bestow upon them.’

‘ Nay, my good Sir William, replied she, her bright eyes glistening with

‘ satisfaction, be so kind as to direct  
‘ me.’

‘ You must be obeyed, madam, said  
‘ he, since you will make me the dis-  
‘ tributor of your generosity, in the  
‘ exertion of which you would yourself  
‘ appear to the greater advantage. Do  
‘ you approve of this? said he, taking  
‘ out a twenty and a thirty pound bank  
‘ note.’ ‘ Certainly, replied she, I have  
‘ no pleasure but in being guided by  
‘ you, Sir.’ He then made Harry ad-  
vance to Sophia, who giving him Betsy  
with one hand, and the note in the  
other, told them, she hoped that the ge-  
nerous behaviour of so good a master,  
would make them both happy.

The young couple were so astonish-  
ed, so confused, and so delighted, that  
they could not find words to express  
either their gratitude or their joy, which  
was doubled by coming upon them by  
surprize.

Sir

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Sir William heard Harry say, as they went out of the room, ‘ Did I not tell ‘ you, my dear, she was a sweet-temper-  
‘ ed young lady?’

Sophia’s face glowed with the delight she felt at having been instrumental in conferring happiness on two worthy young people; and in rendering them at the same time useful members of society, and serviceable to their families; and Sir William never appeared so amiable in her eyes as at that moment. He, ever attentive to read her heart, to penetrate into its inmost recesses, and to observe what was passing there, from that instant became the best of masters, landlords, and neighbours, and was adored by all his tenants and domestics, who said he was the most generous man in the world; but that his being so was owing to a charming angel from heaven. And indeed Sophia; during her short stay at Mount Acres, made herself by her affability so beloved by the poor, and procured so much useful information for Sir William, that he was not

only thereby rendered capable of doing a great deal of good to others, but laid plans, by these means, for considerably improving his own estate. So that he had undoubtedly, as well as his indigent tenants, the strongest reasons to bless his beloved Sophia.

Before they quitted Mount Acres, they returned all the civilities which they had received from the families around them; Sophia's graceful carriage, modesty of countenance, and strict propriety of conduct, fixed her at last firmly in every body's esteem, and made them desirous to have her for a neighbour.

As there were no ladies at Mr. Belmont's, Sir William returned that visit alone, and found his friend as much charmed with the character of Sophia, as he had been with her person and manners. ' You are going to be the happiest man in the world, Sir William, ' said he, in the possession of that lovely girl; but I hope you will not be absolutely  
' solutely

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‘ solutely a Turk, and lock her up from  
‘ us : Our wives and daughters ought  
‘ surely to be admitted to her, that  
‘ they may profit by so fair an exam-  
‘ ple. But to tell you the truth, Acres,  
‘ as you have been before hand with  
‘ me, I do not care how little I see of  
‘ her, for she has made such an impres-  
‘ sion on me, that I am half afraid to  
‘ trust myself too often in her com-  
‘ pany, for fear of being tempted to be  
‘ false to my friend; for, libertine as  
‘ you may think me, Sir William, I am  
‘ of opinion, that a man who suffers  
‘ himself to desire the wife of his friend,  
‘ goes too far. But has this bewitch-  
‘ ing girl no sister who resembles her,  
‘ that I may have it in my power to be  
‘ a good neighbour?’

‘ She has a cousin, replied Sir Wil-  
‘ liam, who has a fine person, but wants  
‘ the numberless attractions of my  
‘ angel.’

‘ Well, well, answered Belmont, if you  
‘ get her down with you after you are  
G 6 ‘ married,

‘ married, I will come and pay my congratulations ; if you do not, I dare not venture.’

Sir William smiled at his friend’s vivacity, and took his leave.

The next morning they left Mount Acres, and returned to Windsor ; from whence they made frequent visits to London, in order to hurry things for the approaching day.

Mrs. Besfield, though always glad to see them, knew not how to dispose of Juliet ; for during Sophia’s stay at Mount Acres, she had assumed courage enough to tell Mr. Somers plainly, that she could not love him, and that it would be much more generous in him, if he really loved her, to give her up, than to pursue his addresses, to make her wretched. She had tried every method before she had recourse to this last : and Sophia had most faithfully kept her promise ; had both spoke when in town, and wrote more than once to her

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her uncle, to intreat him not to oblige Juliet to marry a man to whom she could not give her heart. But Mr. Besfield, though a good-natured, worthy man, had no great notion of these niceties in love; and Mrs. Besfield called them ridiculously romantic. And ridiculous Juliet certainly was, and entertained romantic ideas, in persisting to like Sir William: but Miss West declared she did not think about him, and only begged her uncle and aunt would make her happy by dismissing Mr. Somers.

Mr. Somers, indeed, was so different a character from Sir William, that the woman who had once been seized with an inclination for the one, could not be supposed to have any prejudices in favour of the other. Mr. Somers, though an handsome well-made man, was rather of the insipid insensible order of beings; his character was not liable to any capital exceptions, but he was destitute of all those striking accomplishments which make the best appear with redoubled lustre.

lustre. For a woman who wanted a husband whom she might govern without any trouble, he was indisputably the fittest object in the world; tame, tractable, and tranquil. But as Juliet had herself been ever accustomed to obedience and submission, she had no idea of the prodigious felicity which arises from having a man to manage. The softness in Mr. Somers's behaviour, for which many women would have doated on him, made him appear quite silly in her eyes, and she could not therefore endure him. Sir William, by his spirited carriage, by the agreeable impetuosity in his temper, by the graceful ease of all his motions, by the ardent expression of the most extravagant tenderness in his eyes, whenever he approached his Sophia, had inspired Juliet with passions to which, till her arrival at Windsor, she had been an entire stranger. And tho' Sir William was to her cousin the most assiduous and most submissive lover that ever existed, his assiduity and his submission were, from the violence of his passion, confined to her alone. No other  
woman

woman received such flattering honours. To every other woman there was a fierceness and an haughtiness in his behaviour. It was Sophia who rendered him gentle; and by inspiring him with love, so finely tempered his naturally high spirit, that few women, unattached to another, could resist him.

Juliet, though she thoroughly felt the force of all Sir William's charms, was now sensibly convinced that she, by setting her heart upon Sir William, should suffer her life to waste away in idle expectations. She only desired, therefore, to remain unmarried, till she met with a lover more agreeable to her than Mr. Somers; who finding that he made no progress in his affections, withdrew his visits, having first told Mr. Besfield, that he saw no possibility of gaining the young lady's esteem.

As Mr. Somers bore her refusal with great composure, and appeared to receive his dismissal so very philosophically, Mr. Besfield also became inclin-  
ed

ed to think that he never had been violently in love with his niece, and therefore teased her no more about him.

Juliet therefore being now no longer able to form hopes of the man she liked, and having got rid of the man with whom she was disgusted, became more easy in her mind, and consequently more chearful in her temper, than she had been for some time.

Sophia's cloaths were now all making, and Mrs. Acres, who returned home when they set out for Windsor, arrived in a few days after to see her there, and brought a very fine pearl necklace and ear-rings, together with a set of diamond stars to wear upon her stomacher.

Sir William, charmed with these proofs of his aunt's approbation of his angel, overwhelmed her with civilities; and Sophia expressed her grateful acknowledgments in a manner peculiar to herself. The affection which Sir William now shewed Mrs. Acres was pleasing

ing to Sophia; but it made her at the same time reflect with more seriousness than ever, on the numberless favours she had received, and the affectionate marks of friendship which she was continually receiving from her dear Mrs. Romney.

‘ Shall I not, said she, in a little soliloquy, try to do something for my best friend, to whom I am indebted for this excess of liberality? If I let slip the present opportunity, perhaps I may not have another. Perhaps I may not long possess Sir William’s heart so entirely as I now do. Men are frequently seen to change, and most frequently, when their passions are in the most violent agitation.’

In this abstracted situation she stood, absorbed in thought, at the parlour window. Sir William came close behind her, and throwing his arm round her, asked her what was the subject of her ruminations. ‘ Have I disturbed you, said he, in the midst of a profound

‘ found reverie ?’ for she started as soon as she felt herself embraced by him.

‘ No, my dear Sir William, replied she, with a lively but supplicating look, you come most agreeably to my wishes, for I have one more favour to solicit, in which I am very much interested, if you are not weary of granting my requests.

‘ Can I ever be tired, my dear Sophia, of making you happy ?—No—Wrong me not so much as to think so. Speak, my love; open your gentle heart to your lover, friend, and I may add, husband. Let not its slightest wishes be concealed, for its every wish shall be gratified. You need not ask, my Sophia, am not I and every thing in my possession at your command ?

‘ How very, very good you are ! she replied, sweetly smiling on him ; but do you know that I have not the least desire to command ? It will give me always more pleasure to be obliged  
‘ ed

‘ ed by my dear Sir William. May  
‘ he have ever the power to bestow fa-  
‘ vours, and may his grateful Sophia  
‘ ever feel her fond heart throb when  
‘ she receives them, as she does at this  
‘ instant, with every soft, with every  
‘ tender sensation!’

As she appeared to be more melted at the close of this speech than he had ever seen her before, the effect which the strong marks of her extreme sensibility had on him may be easily imagined—but by those only who have feeling hearts.

Sir William stood gazing at her for some time, in a fixed attitude, motionless, and unable to utter a syllable, or to vent even a sigh. Words at last found a passage, and the excessive warmth of affection, in the language he made use of in the communication of them, made ample amends for the delay, which the fulness of his heart had occasioned.  
‘ Surely, my Sophia, said he, it is not  
‘ in my power, let your request be what  
‘ it

‘ it will, to return the supreme delight  
‘ you have just now given me.’

‘ Yes, she answered with a vivacity,  
‘ you can, you can indeed, by settling  
‘ something handsome on my dear, my  
‘ valuable friend, and your own kind  
‘ aunt Mrs. Romney. Had I not known  
‘ her, I should not have known my  
‘ good, my amiable Sir William. I am  
‘ well assured that her income is by no  
‘ means suitable to her merit; and as  
‘ she is contented with it, though it is  
‘ but small, she therefore doubly de-  
‘ serves an addition to it. Your mar-  
‘ riage will cut off the expectations she  
‘ might naturally have entertained, if  
‘ you had remained single; but which I  
‘ dare say she never formed. Consider,  
‘ Sir William, what you owe, and what  
‘ I owe to this excellent woman: she is  
‘ a treasure, and cannot be too highly  
‘ esteemed.’

‘ Say, say no more, my love, cried  
‘ the transported Sir William — yet  
‘ speak on for ever; for every word  
‘ which

‘ which falls from your sweet lips has  
‘ a new charm in it. What you have  
‘ so kindly mentioned, shall immediately  
‘ be thought of—thought of?—it shall be  
‘ immediately done. I ought to have re-  
‘ flected on it before. Such refined sen-  
‘ timents are reserved for my Sophia  
‘ alone, and could only be excited by  
‘ the most delicate sensations.’

The entrance of Mrs. Romney prevented them from saying any more on this subject. Sir William went on the next day to London, and brought back an abstract of a settlement of 200l. a year on his aunt Romney for her life. He just shewed the sum to Sophia, for her approbation, who was going to express her satisfaction in the most lively terms. ‘ No, my love, I forbid all ac-  
‘ knowledgments ; I want none, either  
‘ from you, or from my dear aunt.’ And putting the paper into the hand of the latter, said, ‘ If you are at all pleased with  
‘ me, madam, shew it by your repeated  
‘ acts of friendship to that best of crea-  
‘ tures’,

'tures,' pointing to Sophia, and went immediately out of the room.

Mrs. Romney, quite surprized, could not tell what to make of their behaviour, and endeavoured to detain Sophia, who followed Sir William, in order to be acquainted with the contents of the paper; but she could not prevail upon her to stay. Sophia ran out after her lover, and left her good friend to look over it by herself; nor did she come near her till supper, when she could not avoid it.

Mrs. Romney, not having in the least expected what was put into her hands, was quite astonished at the perusal of it, and went instantly in search of her two worthy young friends, but found only her nephew; Sophia having made her escape up stairs.

When Sir William had heard all the effusions of gratitude, which his aunt on this occasion poured out very copiously, he ran out into such exalted panegyrics on his Sophia, that Mrs.  
Romney

Romney felt more true delight in having conducted to bring two people together, who seemed to be so happily formed for each other, and to make every body happy about them, than she could have felt at seeing her income doubled or trebled.

When Sophia came down to supper, Mrs. Romney went up to her, with a design to express the high sense she had of her friendship; but that amiable girl taking her round the neck, and most engagingly smiling, said, ‘My dear, dear aunt, do not let us talk now; I want my supper.’

This fond title of aunt, and her bewitching manner of bringing it out, quite transported Sir William, and almost intoxicated him with joy. He caught her rapturously from the arms of Mrs. Romney, and cried, ‘My dear madam, though I have the sincerest regard for you, yet this is too much for me; I cannot sit still, and be a tame looker on: I must have my share  
‘ of

‘ of my Sophia’s endearments ; you must  
‘ not engross them all.’

Sophia laughed heartily at his serious face, and giving him her hand, I hope, said she, you are not jealous of my dear aunt, Sir William ?

‘ Never, my love, he replied, can I  
‘ be so, while you join with me in call-  
‘ ing her by that affectionate name, but  
‘ with which, continued he, looking at  
‘ her with a passionate air, I shall not be  
‘ thoroughly satisfied, till she has a legal  
‘ right to it.’

These three happy people, who only waited till all things were ready to complete their felicity, received, on the following day, a letter from Mrs. Acres’s steward, giving an account of her having been suddenly seized with the gout in her stomach the preceding day, which, notwithstanding all immediate and proper advice, had carried her off in the middle of the night ; and desiring directions how to proceed, as she had ordered

dered him, some time before she was taken so ill, to send directly to her nephew, as soon as she died, as she had appointed him sole heir.

This intelligence greatly distressed and disconcerted Sir William; for his aunt's late affectionate behaviour to his Sophia had very much changed his opinion in her favour. Besides, he was now under a necessity of leaving his dear girl for several hours at a time, to look a little into her affairs, as her fortune was considerable. To increase his mortification, though they were far from desiring to increase it, Sophia and Mrs. Romney both told him, that it would not be paying a proper respect to his aunt's memory, to hurry on the marriage till a decent time after her death.

This delay was, beyond expression, irksome to Sir William; but Sophia, who saw his vexation, and pitied it, said every thing in her power to render him calm and composed, and to lessen the disagreeableness of his situation.

As the house in which Mrs. Acres generally resided was not above a three hours drive from Windsor, Sir William was soon there and back again, for his carriage always flew upon these occasions. While he was absent, Sophia wrote to her uncle Besfield, to inform him of this event, and to tell him that she had desired Sir William to postpone their marriage for a short time out of decency, as the late Mrs. Acres had been very generous to them both. This letter produced an answer of approbation; but it contained also a strict injunction not to make Sir William wait longer than was absolutely necessary.

As Sophia now concealed nothing from her lover, he read the latter part of Mr. Besfield's letter with particular satisfaction, and said, 'I hope now, my Sophia, you want no inducement to obey your uncle.' She assured him that no inducement was wanting, and that she was really sorry that any thing had happened to retard his happiness. This was so obliging an answer, that  
Sir

Sir William bore the delay with much greater patience than could be expected from a man with his warm passions: but indeed, an intimate acquaintance with the virtues of his Sophia, had made him absolutely a new creature; her softness of disposition, her evenness of temper, her affability, and her benevolence, all united, wrought a most surprizing alteration in him, and tuned his soul to harmony and peace.

Sophia did also every thing in her power to make the time appear less tedious to Sir William; she never left him; she sung, she played to him; she exerted all her skill in drawing to entertain him; she walked with him, rode out with him, whenever he desired her company.

In one of their riding excursions, after they had been taking a view of a very fine seat which had received some new embellishments, accompanied by Mrs. Romney in the chariot, just as they made their approach to that lady's house,

Sir William was stopped by a gentleman of his acquaintance, who kept him some time in chat. As Sophia rode on, the servant followed her, and, within a few yards of Mrs. Romney's door, they perceived a gentleman on the ground, just thrown from his horse, with his servant dismounted to assist him.

Sir William's man, who was afraid that Sophia's horse might start and throw her off, begged that she would let him take her down, for fear of an accident. She, who had never alighted from her horse but in Sir William's arms, was unwilling to get off. However, on hearing the gentleman's servant cry out that his master was dead, and call aloud for assistance, she was excessively frightened, and therefore laying her hand upon John's shoulder, easily slid from her horse.

By this time she was near the stranger on the ground, so near as to have a full view of him, which proved fatal. She turned as pale as death at the sight, screamed,

screamed, and sunk to the earth. Sir William was at this instant arrived. Seeing his adored Sophia in this situation, he leaped from his horse, ran to her, and raising her in his arms, cried, "Heavens, my dear creature, what can have caused this accident?"

Sophia, now come to herself, casting her eyes once more towards the gentleman, and then hiding her face in Sir William's bosom, as if she could not bear so horrid a sight, exclaimed, "O Beecher! Beecher!"

To describe what Sir William felt at this moment, is beyond the power of language. His agonies were truly unutterable: he looked distraction; he folded her in his arms; he begged her to be composed.

Mrs. Romney, having quitted the chariot, began to assist Sir William and John in raising Sophia, in order to lift her into it. But as soon as she was upon her feet, she ran towards the place where

Mr. Beecher's man, with the assistance of Mrs. Romney and Sir William's servants, had got his master from the ground. They carried him along like a corpse, to Mrs. Romney's house, who, with an admirable presence of mind, ordered him thither, that she might be certain of coming herself at the truth of this affair, and whether the unfortunate gentleman was really Mr. Beecher.

Sir William in vain endeavoured to keep back Sophia from the sight of so shocking an object; but he was not quick enough. She had another, a still nearer view of him, upon which, throwing up her eyes to heaven, and clasping her hands together,—‘My G-d, said she, ‘in the most trifling accent, has he then ‘lived till now, to perish in this dreadful manner?’

Here her voice and strength both failed her, and she sunk into Sir William's arms, who, with John's help, lifted her into the chariot, and followed her, holding her fast, till they got to  
Mrs.

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Mrs. Romney's door; then carried her into the parlour, and laid her on the sofa.

Beecher had been, by Mrs. Romney's orders, carried up stairs, and placed upon a bed. A surgeon was immediately sent for. While they waited for him, Mrs. Romney asked the servant who his master was, from whence he came, and whither he was going. His name, he said, was Edward Beecher, of Rose-Hill in —shire. He told her, that his master had been abroad for some months in France and Italy, and was now come to Windsor in search of a young lady, a Miss Fanbrook, whom he had long loved.

This news was sufficiently alarming to poor Mrs. Romney, who shuddered both for her nephew and Sophia. She mustered up spirits enough, however, to ask the servant if his master had never been married. To which question he replied, that he was very sure he never had been; 'for though, said he, I have

H 4

' lived

‘ lived with him but two months, I was  
‘ told so by a former servant, who at-  
‘ tended him from England, and is now  
‘ sick in Italy, where my master left  
‘ him well provided for; because his im-  
‘ patience to see this lady would not  
‘ permit him to stay till he was able to  
‘ travel.’

While Mrs. Romney procured this intelligence above, Sophia appeared to be rather dead than alive below. Sir William was very assiduous on his knees, in making use of every argument to administer consolation to her, as she lay reclined on the sofa, and in offering to her salts and drops; but she paid no regard to his consolatory expressions, nor would she accept of any thing which he had recourse to for the restoration of her spirits. Raising herself from the reclined posture she was in, with an inexpressible wildness in her looks, she stared at him, while she pressed his hand, with inconceivable tenderness, and said,  
‘ My dear, dear Sir William, I am con-  
‘ vinced that I give you an infinite deal  
‘ of

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‘ of pain; it racks my heart to see you  
‘ suffer so much upon my account;  
‘ but, continued she, put yourself for a  
‘ moment in my place: To see the man  
‘ of whom I was once so fond; whom I  
‘ once so tenderly loved; whom I thought  
‘ dead, brought to die before my eyes;  
‘ think, think, Sir William, what a  
‘ horrid sight this must be, and pity my  
‘ distress, too exquisite to be described!’

‘ My love, my dearest Sophia, said  
‘ Sir William, whose heart-strings were  
‘ ready to break to see her in so dread-  
‘ ful an agony, be composed; I do, I do  
‘ pity you; heaven knows the anguish  
‘ of my soul at this distressful moment;  
‘ I feel all your sufferings, strongly feel  
‘ them. Would to G-d, continued he,  
‘ looking earnestly up with lifted hands,  
‘ would to G-d I could be in the place  
‘ of this dear lamented Beecher, if my  
‘ being in it would restore the tranqui-  
‘ lity of your mind!—But, my dear So-  
‘ phia, perhaps he is not dead.’

‘ Not dead! cried she’—there she stopped—After a short pause—‘ Well, what then? continued she, he can be nothing to me, nor I to him. O Beecher, Beecher, why did I not see you before? Why, why do I see you now? But it is all my own fault; I only am to blame; my own foolish conduct has loaded me with all this misery.’

Here a deep-fetched sigh stopped her speech; she sunk, quite oppressed with the weight of her complicated grief, into Sir William’s arms, who pressed her to his bosom, little less agitated than her own; and could only beg her to be patient. He really began now, as well as his disturbed imagination would give him leave, to think that there had been some great mistake concerning Beecher, and that the accounts both of his marriage and his death were equally false. The admission of these thoughts, with the agonies he felt at hearing her so pathetically lament the loss of him, almost

most deprived him of his senses. The distresses, however, of his Sophia, which he so truly compassionated, would not let him dwell upon his own. ‘ Make yourself easy, my dear angel, cried he, it is possible that he may yet live: if he recovers, and still deserves this unexampled tenderness, you shall be made happy, though the surrender of you is purchased with my life.’

This generous offer was neither unheard, nor disregarded by Sophia; she sighed mournfully, and looking at her lover with eyes in which grief and love, the most poignant grief, and the most tender love, were painted in the strongest colours, ‘ Oh! Sir William, she cried, you are too good. Why did you ever know me? Why did I come into the world to occasion nothing but trouble and uneasiness to those who love me?’

As the surgeon was now performing his operations on Mr. Beecher, Mrs. Romney came down to Sophia, who just

raised her eyes, and said faintly, ‘ Is he  
‘ dead, madam?’

‘ I cannot tell, my dear, said Mrs.  
‘ Romney; the surgeon is gone to see  
‘ him; I have left his servant to as-  
‘ sist. But you are very much out  
‘ of order yourself, my dear Sophia; let  
‘ me persuade you to go up to your  
‘ chamber, and try to take some rest;  
‘ you may be assured that all possible  
‘ care will be taken of Mr. Beecher.’

When she mentioned the name of Beecher, she cast a very intelligent, but melancholy look at Sir William, the meaning of which he but too well, for his own peace, comprehended. He had, however, spirits enough left to persuade his Sophia to comply with her friend’s request, and to endeavour to sooth her sorrows by sleep.

‘ No, Sir William, said she, let me,  
‘ I beseech you, hear the decision of his  
‘ fate where I am. I shall have more  
‘ courage

‘ courage when you are with me,’ continued she, gazing earnestly at him.

‘ My dearest life, he answered, most fervently do I wish that I could give thee every kind of comfort.’

‘ Madam, said he, turning to Mrs. Romney, I beg you would enquire what the opinion of the surgeon is, that my Sophia may be the sooner out of her pain.’ She immediately withdrew.

‘ Out of that, said she, I shall never be.’

‘ Why, why, my dear creature?’ Sir William interrupted eagerly.

‘ Because, said she, whatever be his fate, I must be miserable.

‘ Say not so, my Sophia, cried her fond lover; you flattering told me but a few hours ago, that it was in my power to make you happy; did you  
‘ then,

‘ then, my love, deceive me when you  
‘ said so?’

‘ Ah, no! cried she, I never intended  
‘ to deceive you. Heaven is my witness!  
‘ letting fall a shower of tears—never,  
‘ never to deceive you; but we have been  
‘ all unfortunately in an error.’

Mrs. Romney came down again, and  
said to Sophia, ‘ Make yourself easy, my  
‘ dear, there is no danger. The sur-  
‘ geon says he was only stunned with his  
‘ fall; he has bled him; he is quite come  
‘ to himself, and has spoken to me; but  
‘ he must keep his bed till to-morrow,  
‘ and then he hopes to find himself  
‘ pretty well.’

‘ Thank G-d, thank G-d, cried So-  
‘ phia, wiping her tears; then, if you  
‘ please, madam, I will go up stairs. Sir  
‘ William will be so good as to pardon  
‘ me, if I have shewn too much concern  
‘ and anxiety for poor Beecher. I have  
‘ now nothing else to bestow on him,  
‘ added she, weeping again. This is the  
‘ parting

‘ parting pang : to-morrow, Sir Wil-  
‘ liam, I shall be entirely yours.’

Sir William, exceedingly moved to see her in this condition, pressed her cold hand to his lips with an inexpressible ardor ; and with his eyes bathed in tears, unable to utter a word, saw Mrs. Romney lead her to her own apartment.

As soon as she was out of sight, he threw himself into the seat which she had just quitted, and gave a free vent to the distraction which his mind had laboured under from the commencement of this event.

Mrs. Romney, when she had seen Sophia put to bed, and had given her orders to her servant to wait in the room, but on no account to speak to her, except she stirred or spoke, went down to Sir William, whom she found in a much more pitiable condition than Sophia was.

‘ Oh !

‘ Oh! madam, said he, how have  
 ‘ you left that adorable creature? What,  
 ‘ what am I to think of this unexpected  
 ‘ ed event?’

‘ Unexpected indeed, Mrs. Romney  
 ‘ replied, with a sigh; I am really quite  
 ‘ confounded at it. I sincerely wish,  
 ‘ my dear Sir William, that you had  
 ‘ been married before it happened. But  
 ‘ who could foresee’——

‘ No, madam, said he, with a discon-  
 ‘ solate air, Providence, who still watches  
 ‘ over this angel of a woman, and who  
 ‘ knows that I could not make her as  
 ‘ happy as she ought to be, brought  
 ‘ her beloved Beecher for that purpose.  
 ‘ I must give her up, madam: I will see  
 ‘ her made happy by another, though I  
 ‘ cannot make her so myself: if I lose  
 ‘ my life by the violence which I offer  
 ‘ to my inclinations, I will give her up,  
 ‘ in order to make her happy.’

‘ Do not, my dear Sir William, throw  
 ‘ yourself into despair, nor be in such a  
 ‘ hurry

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‘hurry to be unhappy. We yet know  
‘little more than his servant has told  
‘us. Perhaps Mr. Beecher himself may  
‘not chuse to marry her after her en-  
‘gagement with you. Nay, Sophia  
‘herself, I think, if I know her tho-  
‘roughly, will keep her word still, and  
‘be yours, though the struggle between  
‘love and honour gives her tender heart  
‘a great deal of pain.’

‘Can I then, replied Sir William,  
‘pretend to love her as I ought, and  
‘see her labour under any difficulty, of  
‘a nature so injurious to her future fe-  
‘licity?’ No, madam, no; she loves  
‘Beecher, still she loves him, passionately  
‘loves him; her looks, her words, her  
‘actions, all, all confirm the truth of  
‘what I say. She has never loved me;  
‘what I foolishly mistook for love, was  
‘nothing but gratitude; nothing but  
‘compassion; nothing but friendship.  
‘She may esteem me perhaps, but how  
‘faint, how cold were all her regards  
‘for me, compared with those which  
‘she has now shewn for Beecher! From  
the

‘ the natural benevolence of her heart  
‘ she pitied the misery which she saw me  
‘ endure on her account; she gave me  
‘ pity, she could not give me, what I  
‘ most wanted, love. I may, it is pro-  
‘ bable, still excite her pity, but I can  
‘ never now hope for any thing else.’

The agonies which shook his whole frame, while he uttered this desponding speech, and the sighs and tears with which it was accompanied, almost distracted Mrs. Romney, because it was not in her power to afford him any comfort. She sat, therefore, weeping by his side, and upbraiding herself with having been the unlucky occasion of his becoming acquainted with Sophia.

‘ Oh! do not, my dear aunt, said he,  
‘ do not accuse yourself; you are in no  
‘ shape to blame; if my acquaintance  
‘ with this dear lovely girl has caused  
‘ me a great deal of pain, it has also  
‘ given me all the joys I ever knew in  
‘ life. The pangs which I suffered in  
‘ seeing her unhappy, were over-bal-  
‘ lanced

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‘ lanced by the transports I felt when I  
‘ saw her pleased with my assiduities to  
‘ give her pleasure. It is still in my  
‘ power to make her eyes sparkle with  
‘ joy, and her charming bosom flutter  
‘ with delight, and I will do all I can  
‘ to make her as happy as she deserves  
‘ to be. I shall, I know, be for ever  
‘ wretched in doing so ; but to promote  
‘ my lovely, my adored Sophia’s happi-  
‘ ness, I will learn to bear my own  
‘ wretchedness with patience and resig-  
‘ nation.’

In this manner he passed the greatest part of the night, before Mrs. Romney could prevail on him to go to rest ; and even then, he only threw himself on his bed. That good lady, frightened and uneasy, walked backwards and forwards from his room to Sophia’s, not caring to leave either of them alone, nor indeed to trust them to their servants.

As to Sophia, she never closed her eyes the whole night, but spent it in sighs and tears. Mr. Beecher, who had  
occasioned

occasioned all this distress, was by much the most composed of the three. He now felt very little inconvenience from his fall, and his thoughts were far more engrossed by his love than his disaster. As soon as his servant was alone with him, having like a true servant heard all the secrets of the family in the kitchen, he opened his budget, and told him the situation of every individual in it; and Mr. Beecher had the satisfaction to find, from Thomas's intelligence, that his Sophia still loved him tenderly; but to account for the report of his marriage and his death, he was utterly at a loss, and therefore ordered his man, when he thought Mrs. Romney was stirring, to let her know that he desired the favour of speaking to her.

Mrs. Romney was so much taken up with her nephew and Sophia, that it was late before she could comply with Mr. Beecher's request, whose surgeon having been with him, and given him leave to rise, he waited for the arrival of that lady, in an easy chair, in the apartment

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apartment which she had allotted to him.

Sophia, by this time fatigued with the violent agitation of her mind, was fallen into a slumber. Sir William was come down in the parlour as distracted as ever, but received great pleasure from hearing that Sophia was capable of taking a little rest.

Mrs. Romney, as Sophia was in a slumber, and Sir William thereby rendered more composed, went to Mr. Beecher, whom she now immediately recognized, and knew him to be the same person who had passed by her so hastily upon the Terrace, in the beginning of her acquaintance with Sophia.

He rose at her entrance, made a great number of apologies for the trouble he had occasioned in her family, and begged to know if she had not a young lady with her, Miss Sophia Fanbrook.

‘I have the highest regard for her,’ said he, and intreat you to let me see her.’

His

His manner of accosting her had something very engaging in it. His address was very agreeable and polite; his person was pleasing, and together with his address, strongly prepossessed Mrs. Romney in his favour, notwithstanding the uneasiness which she suffered on Sir William's account. Having, however, determined her behaviour, she replied, though with an air which shewed a reluctance to refuse him, ' Many things, ' Sir, have happened since you saw the ' young lady you mentioned (who is ' indeed at present with me) which ' make it necessary for me to know the ' reason why you have neither seen ' her nor wrote to her in so long a ' time.'

' You may perhaps, madam, he answered with a sigh, pronounce sentence ' against me; and I may, perhaps, find ' an enemy where I hoped to meet ' with a friend. But from a just sense ' which I have of all your favours, and ' the great desire I have to clear myself ' to my dear Miss Fanbrook, I find ' myself

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‘ myself irresistibly urged to act with  
‘ the utmost sincerity towards you.’

He then began his story, and told her all that has already been related by Sophia, on her first acquaintance with Mrs. Romney, till he came to that period at which she was obliged to break off, and thus continued:

‘ When I found, madam, that neither my prayers nor intreaties could  
‘ procure me a sight of my dear Sophy,  
‘ but that she obstinately refused to see  
‘ me, I grew half distracted. Receiving, however, a letter which required my immediate presence at Rose-Hill, I set out, recommending the  
‘ dearest object to me in the world, to the care of her uncle and aunt, and  
‘ proposed to return in a few days, hoping to behold an alteration for the  
‘ better in her health, and to find a turn in her disposition in my behalf. As  
‘ soon as I got home, the anxiety and  
‘ uneasiness under which I had laboured, threw me into a violent fever.

‘ I was,

‘ I was, I believe, deprived of my senses  
‘ by it, for the first objects I saw about  
‘ my bed, were my friend Mr. Ransom,  
‘ and a young lady who lived with him,  
‘ and who passed for a relation of his.  
‘ I demanded, eagerly, news of my  
‘ Sophia; he told me, that she was re-  
‘ covered and gone out of town for the  
‘ air; but as she was determined never  
‘ to see me again, her friends refused to  
‘ inform him where she was. This  
‘ news hurried on a relapse, and though  
‘ I preserved my senses, and underwent  
‘ a tedious confinement, during which  
‘ the sickleness of my Sophia gave me  
‘ the greatest uneasiness, I grew better,  
‘ and determined to go to town, and to  
‘ endeavour to find her out, and learn  
‘ from her own lips the cause of her un-  
‘ kind, ungentle treatment. From this  
‘ resolution my friend Ransom very  
‘ much dissuaded me, telling me that I  
‘ never could be happy with a woman  
‘ of so capricious a temper, and that  
‘ there were many women, handsomer  
‘ than she now was, who would think  
‘ themselves happy in my love; giving  
‘ me

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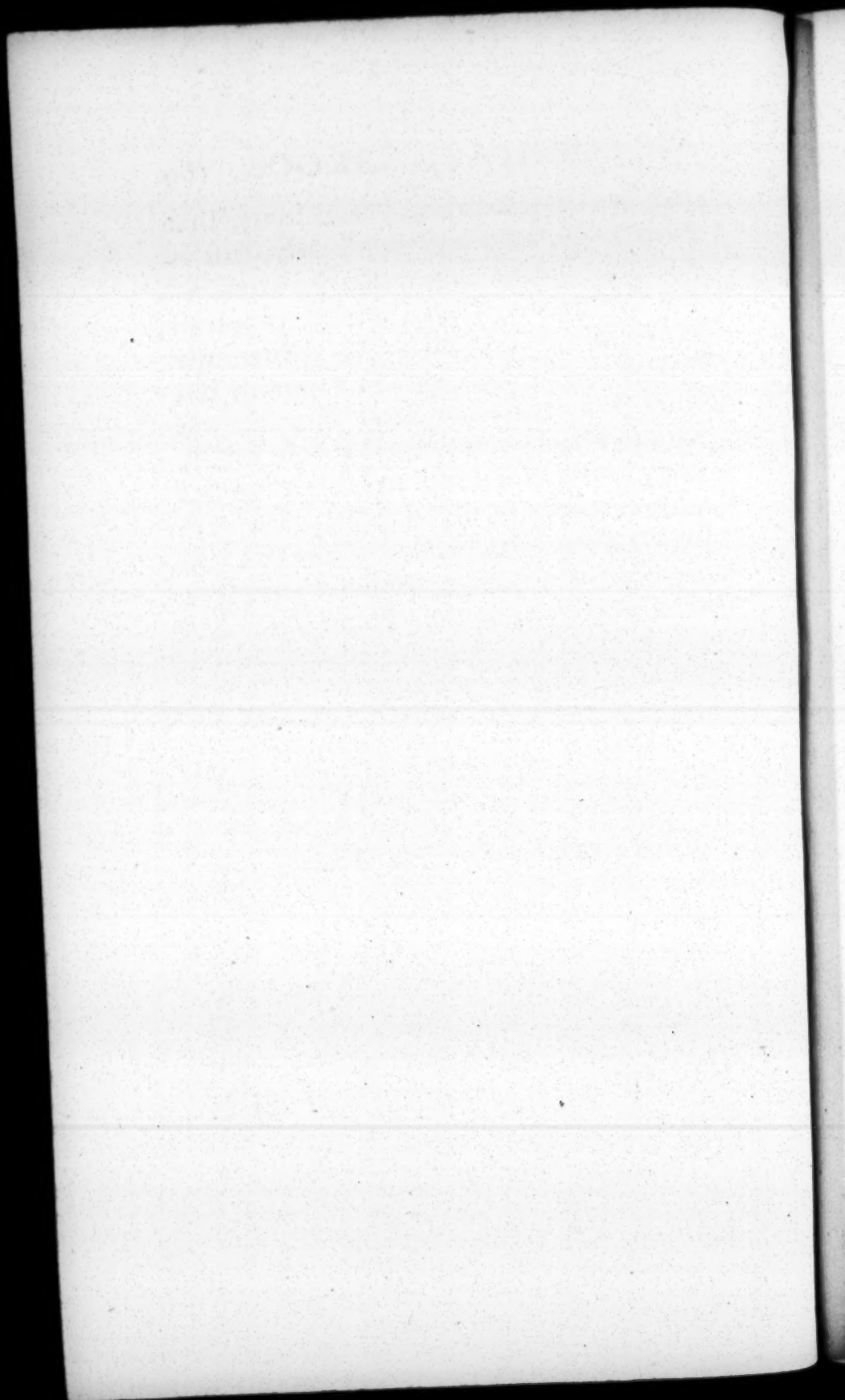
‘ me at the same time broad hints, that  
‘ Miss Sally, who had constantly, but as  
‘ I thought very unnecessarily, attended  
‘ me during my illness, would be pleas-  
‘ ed with my addresses. I turned my  
‘ eyes towards her while he spoke; but  
‘ though I could not deny that she was  
‘ handsome, she appeared to me totally  
‘ destitute of all those amiable qualities  
‘ which adorned my Sophia. I there-  
‘ fore made no reply, but common ex-  
‘ pressions of civility to these advances  
‘ of my friend, which seemed to dis-  
‘ please him.’

End of the FIFTH BOOK.

Vol. II.

I

THE



THE  
HISTORY  
OF  
MISS SOPHIA FANBROOK.  
BOOK VI.

I Grew better in health, continued Mr. Beecher, and he proposed a party to Brighthelmstone. I agreed to his proposal, but sent my servant first to town, to know if Miss Fanbrook was returned to her uncle, and

‘ and was informed that she was gone  
‘ to spend some time with Mrs. Greville  
‘ at Windsor. Resolving to make one  
‘ more effort to see her, I went thither,  
‘ called at Mrs. Greville’s, and was told  
‘ by her servant that she was not there,  
‘ and that Mrs. Greville herself was gone  
‘ to stay a few weeks with a friend, a few  
‘ miles off. Disappointed again, in not  
‘ meeting with my Sophia, I became  
‘ indifferent to every thing; and receiv-  
‘ ing a letter from Ransom, to remind  
‘ me of my promise of meeting him at  
‘ Brighthelmstone, I was determined, in  
‘ my way thither, to go abroad, and en-  
‘ deavour, by a variety of new objects,  
‘ to conquer so ill-placed a passion;  
‘ but to my pleasure and surprize, I  
‘ met Mrs. Greville at that place. I  
‘ asked her eagerly after the health of  
‘ her niece, and where she was; she told  
‘ me, that she was very well, and at  
‘ Windsor. I was quite confounded at  
‘ this reply, as I was but just come from  
‘ Windsor, and was assured of her not  
‘ being there; and imagined that, still  
‘ determined not to see me, she was  
‘ really

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‘ really concealed at Mrs. Greville’s, and  
‘ had ordered herself to be denied. I  
‘ stood for some moments so amazed,  
‘ that I was incapable of speaking; but  
‘ on recollection, as I was going to ask  
‘ Mrs. Greville some particulars relat-  
‘ ing to this perplexing affair, I looked  
‘ up and saw, instead of Mrs. Greville,  
‘ my friend Ransom standing by me.  
‘ I told him all that had passed; and he  
‘ said that every body would consider  
‘ me as a madman, if I pursued a girl  
‘ who had used me so excessively ill,  
‘ and who both hated and despised me.  
‘ Shall I confess to you, madam, that  
‘ this speech roused my pride, and de-  
‘ termined me to leave England? I put  
‘ my design immediately into execution,  
‘ and spent part of my time in Italy, and  
‘ part of it in France. At Leghorn I  
‘ met with a gentleman of the same  
‘ name and family, possessed also of an  
‘ estate in the same county with my-  
‘ self. Of these particulars I was ignor-  
‘ ant till then. He was a very agree-  
‘ able man, and I should have spent  
‘ more time in his company, had he not

‘ fallen in love with an extremely agree-  
‘ able English lady there. His exces-  
‘ sive fondness for her made him talk  
‘ perpetually about her; and the return  
‘ which she made to his love, put me so  
‘ much in mind of the happiness which  
‘ I once enjoyed with Miss Fanbrook,  
‘ that I quitted the place in disgust.  
‘ At Genoa I met with a gentleman  
‘ who accidentally mentioned Mr. Bes-  
‘ field, and I took that opportunity to en-  
‘ quire after my Sophia. Mr. Besfield,  
‘ he told me, had suffered great misfor-  
‘ tunes; and added, that his nieces were  
‘ both at Windsor, with a Mrs. Rom-  
‘ ney; and that the eldest had given up,  
‘ according to the information he had  
‘ received, her own little fortune, to  
‘ assist her uncle in the re-establishment  
‘ of his affairs. This amiable instance  
‘ of generosity, which so strongly cha-  
‘ racterized my dear Sophia, touched  
‘ me to the heart. I thought I saw her  
‘ unhappy, without fortune and without  
‘ friends, at least without any friends  
‘ who were able to be of service to her.  
‘ I then flattered myself, that I might  
‘ possibly,

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‘ possibly, by returning to make once  
‘ more an offer of my person and for-  
‘ tune, deserve her affections, and win  
‘ her to my faithful arms; pleasing  
‘ myself at the same time to think that,  
‘ even in case of refusal, I should be  
‘ near her, to assist and comfort her if  
‘ she stood in need of a friend. These  
‘ reflections hastened my return to Eng-  
‘ land. I took my passage in the first  
‘ ship that was ready to sail, and on my  
‘ arrival set out directly for Windsor.  
‘ My horse threw me just in sight of the  
‘ house which contains all that my  
‘ heart doats on. To your humanity,  
‘ madam, for receiving me, and to your  
‘ hospitality for so kindly entertaining  
‘ me, I am under infinite obligations:  
‘ and if I find but my dear Sophia still  
‘ inclined to listen to my fond vows, I  
‘ shall look upon the accident which be-  
‘ fel me yesterday, as the most fortunate  
‘ event in my life. Thus, madam, I  
‘ have, without the least disguise, ac-  
‘ quainted you with every movement of  
‘ my heart; and I hope you will prevail

‘ on my dear Miss Fanbrook to admit  
‘ me once more as her lover.’

Mrs. Romney thanked him in the most obliging manner for the confidence he had reposed in her, and said, that Miss Fanbrook was not then very well, but told him that she would soon let him know her determination with regard to him.

She then went down to Sir William, who asked her, with a quick tone, where he had been. ‘ I am almost dead, said he, with suspense.’ She related to him, as concisely as she could, all that Mr. Beecher had communicated. Sir William only replied with a sigh, which seemed to rend the breast from which it issued.

‘ How must I act in this affair, Sir William? said Mrs. Romney. Must I tell Sophia all that you have just heard, or must I conduct her to Mr. Beecher?’

‘ Oh !

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‘ Oh! she is yet too much disordered,  
‘ replied he, to bear such an interview.  
‘ It may injure her tender constitution.  
‘ Spare her, my dear aunt; let no pain  
‘ come near her; let felicity only be her  
‘ portion; go to her, tell her all that  
‘ her Beecher has said, and let her dear  
‘ bosom enjoy that peace, of which mine  
‘ must ever be deprived.’

Mrs. Romney, with a sorrowful and lingering pace, went to Miss Fanbrook’s apartment, who was up, and seemed to be glad to see her. Her face was very pale, and her eyes were much swelled with crying. She put on, however, a faint smile at the sight of her friend.

‘ My dear Mrs. Romney, said she,  
‘ tell me, how does Sir William?——  
‘ But poorly, I fear,’—added she, observing her friend’s melancholy aspect.  
‘ But be not uneasy, my dear Mrs.  
‘ Romney, I will keep my word, and  
‘ fulfil all my engagements with him.  
‘ I have only one more favour to beg  
‘ of him, and then my heart will be at  
I 5 ‘ rest.’

‘ rest.’ Here she fetched a deep sigh.  
‘ Tell him I must see Beecher : I will  
‘ see him but once, and all will be  
‘ over.’

It was with the greatest difficulty that she uttered these few words, so much was she affected, agitated, and distressed. After a short pause, she, however, thus proceeded. ‘ But will he not give me  
‘ leave to see him once, do you think  
‘ my dear friend, not once ?’

‘ He will oppose you in nothing,  
‘ my dear, Mrs. Romney answered ; sit  
‘ down, and be composed. Sir William  
‘ loves you too tenderly to make you  
‘ unhappy ; you know he does. Were  
‘ you but a witness to his sufferings, you  
‘ would feel for him as I do.’

Poor Mrs. Romney, in delivering the last words of her speech, could not refrain from tears ; for she was well assured that her nephew would resign Sophia to her first lover, and that he would not be able to survive the loss of her.

‘ Ah!

‘ Ah! my dear Mrs. Romney, said  
‘ Sophia, whose eyes sympathized with  
‘ those of her friend, stop, stop, these  
‘ tears; I am but too well acquainted  
‘ with the cause of them. But I hope  
‘ you will have no occasion to shed them  
‘ for Sir William. Have I not assured  
‘ you, that I am ready to perform my  
‘ engagements with him?’

‘ I did not complain of you, my dear  
‘ Sophia, replied she; but you have  
‘ not yet heard Mr. Beecher’s story, and  
‘ I must relate it to you; Sir William  
‘ desired I would.’

Sophia heard the story of Beecher with the utmost attention: she expressed a most lively concern at the part where her rejecting him was mentioned; but poured out a thousand transports on finding that he had been so faithful, and still so fondly attached to her. But the last mark of his fidelity and his affection melted her extremely. She burst into an agony of tears and self-reproaches, for having treated so amiable, so ge-  
nerous.

nerous a man in so unmerited a manner.

When Mrs. Romney concluded her narrative with Beecher's warm request to see her, Sophia rose up: 'Come, my dear friend, said she, taking her by the arm, assist me to go to him; support me with your presence, for much I fear the failure of my strength. Yet once more I assure you, that Sir William shall have no cause to complain of me.'

'But my dear Sophia, said Mrs. Romney, endeavouring to detain her, you are yet too much out of order to bear so interesting a conversation; and Sir William, who trembles for your health, intreats you to stay till you are a little better able to undertake such a visit.'

'I am not ill, my dear madam, said she, I am only afflicted. But Sir William is too good; let me see him first, if you please.'

She

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She sat down again; but Mrs. Romney, thinking that the sight of her in so mournful a way, would only increase Sir William's grief, said, 'No, my dear, you will both be affected by seeing each other, too much.'

'Then I will go to Beecher, replied 'Sophia,' rising once more, and with greater alacrity than Mrs. Romney imagined she could have shewn, after the struggles which she had undergone.

'Come, madam, said she, give me this farther proof of your friendship, I must intreat you to be present; I have a great deal to go through.'

Mrs. Romney, obliged to comply, led her to the door of Beecher's apartment, which she opened, and said, 'I have consented, Sir, to your request; I have brought Miss Fanbrook to see you.'

He ran to meet her; but though she had summoned all her courage, she was not able to sustain the various emotions which

which she felt, and under which she would have sunk, had not his supporting arm saved her from falling on the floor. She fainted; however not quite: she was only for some time deprived of the power of utterance; nor was her lover, indeed, in a much more tranquil situation. Assisted by Mrs. Romney, he placed her in a chair, and, sitting down by her, took her by the hand, which he kissed with fervor; then looking at her with fixed eyes, in which pleasure and perplexity were at once strongly expressed; ‘My dear Sophia, said he, ‘how delighted, how transported am I ‘to see you again! But never did I ‘hope, little did I expect, to see you ‘thus pale, thus labouring under sickness and sorrow. Tell me, my Sophia, ‘what has caused this alteration in you; ‘and if your Beecher is still dear to you, ‘believe me, he wishes nothing more ‘ardently than to restore to you that ‘peace and felicity which he was once ‘happy enough to see you possessed of. ‘Is it in my power, O! tell me, to ‘give happiness to my Sophia?’

‘Alas,

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‘ Alas, cried she, with a deep sigh,  
‘ accompanied with a look of exquisite  
‘ tenderness, the days of your Sophia’s  
‘ happiness have long been over; those  
‘ days in which she knew no happiness  
‘ but what you had it in your power to  
‘ give her. My boundless vanity and  
‘ extravagant folly, my monstrous in-  
‘ gratitude and cruel behaviour, drove  
‘ you from me; from that hour I have  
‘ never tasted tranquility!’

‘ Do not, my Sophia, said he, do not  
‘ thus load yourself with undeserved re-  
‘ proaches, for that they are undeserved  
‘ I am thoroughly convinced. What-  
‘ ever were your reasons for banishing  
‘ me from your presence, they appeared  
‘ to you, at the time you was governed  
‘ by them, satisfactory. They are lock-  
‘ ed up in your own breast, and there let  
‘ them remain; I ask you not to reveal  
‘ them: I will never ask you: too hap-  
‘ py in being again blessed with the  
‘ sight of my dear love, and having it  
‘ again in my power to make you mine.  
‘ To have your kind consent to be so,  
‘ will

‘ will crown all my wishes, and complete my happiness, could I but remove this weight of sorrow which so heavily oppresses you.’

‘ And what increases the weight of it, Beecher, said she, is’——

‘ Is what?’ interrupted he impatiently.

‘ The bitter reflection, replied she, that it never will be removed. I never can be yours.’

‘ Gracious heaven! cried Beecher, looking at her with astonishment and grief; what dost thou mean, my love, by these mysterious, these alarming, these cruel words? What, what can hinder you from being mine? Are you not my first, my only love? Have I ever had any other? Have you had any other? I need not ask that question; those dear eyes, still faithful to the dictates of your tender heart, plead now, plead at this moment forcibly for  
‘ your

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‘ your Beecher. You have not, indeed,  
‘ heard my reasons for leaving England  
‘ without seeing you; but when you  
‘ have heard them, and have consider-  
‘ ed how we were both circumstanced, I  
‘ firmly believe that you will not only  
‘ pity, but forgive me.’

‘ I have heard all, replied Sophia;  
‘ my kind, my ever-to-be-esteemed  
‘ friend here has minutely related every  
‘ particular of your story; and my fond  
‘ heart sighs to return its grateful ac-  
‘ knowledgments for your last generous  
‘ effort in my favour. But it sighs, it  
‘ longs in vain; you must now hear  
‘ my story, Beecher: and if my follies  
‘ can be heard without disgust, without  
‘ detestation; if you can be still partial  
‘ to so unworthy an object; let this lady  
‘ join with me in convincing you that  
‘ I have yet greater, more binding obli-  
‘ gations to a most generous man, whom  
‘ though I do not, cannot love him  
‘ as I ought, I must endeavour to make  
‘ happy. My task is a severe one, but  
‘ honour

‘ honour urges me to the performance  
‘ of it.’

Beecher was extremely astonished at hearing her talk in this manner, and could not conceive, as his engagements with her were prior to any other, what claim another could make to her; but finding that she insisted upon being heard, he listened with the stillest attention; and during the relation of her story, his features underwent a greater variety of changes than her's had been marked with before. The first part of her narrative, in which she disclosed her motives for refusing him, very sensibly affected him; and he interrupted her in the midst of her self-accusations, of which she was very liberal, on a review of those motives; by declaring that she did herself much injustice; that the sentiments which had influenced her conduct were general among her sex, in the earlier, gayer seasons of life; and that he was well assured, if she had consented to become his wife at that time, his unwearied

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wearied endeavours to please her, together with his excessive fondness for her, would have soon reconciled her to a middling fortune, from which, he said, more true happiness would arise with the person on whom we have fixed our first inclinations, and who as fondly returns them, than from the most splendid situation, without the object of our desires. ‘ Riches and grandeur, my dear, continued he, are more calculated to give pleasure to the world, than to ourselves; to make us appear happy, rather than to make us really so. The home felt joys, the domestic comforts of life, are oftener found in the humble dwellings of the lowest cottagers, than in the superb edifices of the great, who are too often equally distinguished for their rank, their fortune, and their infelicity. The pomp, ceremony, and parade, with which high and extensive connections are attended, are so far from conferring happiness, that they commonly produce a numerous train of cares and disquiet.

‘disquietudes, which render life rather  
‘a burthen than a blessing.’

‘Too, too well, my dear Beecher,  
‘said Sophia, am I now convinced of  
‘the justness of your observations.’—She  
wept when she said so.—‘But I am con-  
‘vinced too late.’

‘Not at all, said he, my love; it is  
‘never too late to repair your faults, if  
‘you are resolved still to call them so.  
‘It was your extreme delicacy, I am  
‘satisfied, which prevented you from  
‘giving your dear self to my wishes.  
‘It was not your passion for pomp and  
‘splendor, as you would make me  
‘imagine. You fancied you did not  
‘return my first love with equal fond-  
‘ness, and therefore deprived yourself  
‘for some time of the power to return  
‘it. But that time is luckily over now,  
‘and we have nothing to do but to be  
‘happy.’

He was going at the close of this af-  
fectionate speech, to take her into his  
arms,

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arms, and to repeat a thousand tender things; but she again stopped him, and then calling upon Mrs. Romney to assist her in doing justice to Sir William, related the progress of his passion for her, from its first beginning to the present moment. She enlarged upon his unwearied attentions to gain her affections, his amazing generosity, and still more upon the misery which he had endured upon her account, and with which he was now struggling. ‘ I refused all his offers, said she, though his life was at stake, till I was informed of your decease. When I had a little weaned my heart from you, I promised, out of mere compassion, to give my hand to Sir William. Nay, I this very morning repeated my promises. Think, therefore, Beecher, think on how slight a foundation your hopes of happiness are built! Think how vain they must ever be! Go, go, in search of happiness to another object, for  
‘ with me’——

A sudden

A sudden shower of tears interrupted her here, to which she gave a free vent; while Beecher, in the depth of despair at the condition she was in, said every thing he could think of to comfort and to cheer her. Taking her hand, and pressing it between his, while sympathizing tears bedewed his face, ‘ Why, ‘ why, cried he, my Sophia, will you ‘ thus give force to an affliction which ‘ must prove fatal to us all? Though I ‘ will allow Sir William to be the most ‘ amiable of men; though I will allow ‘ that he has hitherto behaved to you in ‘ the most generous, the most disinterested manner; when he finds your ‘ first, your only lover returned with the ‘ same ardent affection for you he ever ‘ felt, with a thousand times more love, ‘ if possible (for the sufferings which ‘ you have endured, and the condition ‘ you are in, awaken all the sensibility ‘ in me, which a human heart can feel ‘ for so amiable an object in distress); ‘ he must in his turn allow, that the ‘ highest strain of generosity is to confer happiness, rather than to receive it.

‘ If,

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‘ If, therefore, your Beecher is still dear  
‘ to this fond, this trembling bosom;  
‘ still pleasing to these dear eyes; or at  
‘ least still dearer than this generous Sir  
‘ William; let my Sophia determine our  
‘ fates: let her choice fix our future  
‘ happiness or future misery: and let  
‘ him, whose doom it is to be rejected,  
‘ submit without murmuring, though  
‘ that submission should shorten his life.’

Here he paused, and rivetted his eyes on Sophia in so languishing a manner, that she was scarce able to meet his looks. Mrs. Romney, thinking that the scene grew too affecting, and that they might both wish to pour out their souls to each other, without witness to their tender effusions, rose in order to depart.

‘ My dear Mrs. Romney, said Sophia,  
‘ rising feebly’—she had but strength  
enough to catch hold of her gown—  
‘ my dear Mrs. Romney, said she, I  
‘ beseech you not to leave me: I am  
‘ going with you.’ She tottered so  
much when she spoke these words, that  
if

if Beecher had not supported her in his arms, she would have fallen down. She strove to disengage herself from him, but in vain; for though her tongue refused him every gratification, her eyes, in spite of all she could do to prevent them, told him very plainly the emotions of her heart, and told him as plainly that these emotions were in his favour. Encouraged therefore by her tender glances, he pulled her gently to him. ‘ Surely, my Sophia, said he, surely, after so long, so painful an absence, one dear, one fond embrace ought not to be denied me.’

He staid for no reply, but pressing her to his bosom, kissed her with the most excessive tenderness. She had just strength enough to break from him, and turning to Mrs. Romney, whom she hastily seized by the arm, cried, ‘ Oh! save me, save me from my Beecher! save me from myself!’ And that she might neither be seen to discover any more marks of weakness to her lover, nor see any more marks of his passion, she

she clapped her hand before her eyes, and hurried out of the room as fast as her feeble limbs would let her.

She directed her steps to Mrs. Romney's dressing-room, threw herself into a chair, and for a few moments gave a free passage to her sighs. Then wiping her eyes, and turning to her friend, 'Now, madam, said she, with an air of uncommon resolution, all is over; I am ready to see Sir William, when you please.' But upon Mrs. Romney's looking at her with a mixture of compassion and esteem, and crying, 'O, Sophia, Sir William loves you too well to require such a sacrifice as this;'

'The better he loves me, replied she, the more he deserves it.'

Mrs. Romney then left her, and went down to her nephew, who, all wild with impatience below, ran up to her, to ask her the meaning of her staying so long from him. She gave him, in the fewest words she could make use of, a succinct

relation of the interview between the lovers.

‘ And how did my Sophia, cried he, support so tender a scene? for she always will be my Sophia; always the friend of my heart, the delight of my soul.’

When Mrs. Romney described their situation at parting, and the struggles which she felt when she tore herself away from him; and told him with how composed a countenance she expected him in her dressing-room; ‘ Save her!’ cried he, yes, I will save her, snatch her from wretchedness and sorrow; restore her to life and happiness.’

With these words he entered the dressing-room; and though his spirits had perhaps never been in a more violent commotion, he, with a resolute air, at once tender and respectful, thus addressed his more-than-ever adored Sophia.

‘ I come,

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‘ I come, madam, said he, with a heart  
‘ equally alive to your sufferings and  
‘ your joys, to sympathize with you on  
‘ the perfect recovery of Mr. Beecher.  
‘ And that you may be convinced that  
‘ my wishes for your happiness are  
‘ sincere, I freely resign you to this  
‘ amiable lover, if that resignation,’ con-  
tinued he, with a sigh which he could  
not suppress, and which seemed to rend  
his heart-strings, ‘ can promote it. By  
‘ making this sacrifice, I flatter myself,  
‘ from the many proofs I have received  
‘ of the excellence of your disposition,  
‘ that I shall thereby always secure your  
‘ friendship, the only blessing I have  
‘ now to pray for in this world; as I  
‘ dare not, by the return of Mr. Beecher,  
‘ hope for any thing farther. Will you  
‘ refuse me this last, this only consol-  
‘ ation, Miss Fanbrook?’

‘ No, Sir William, said she, I will on  
‘ the contrary promise you more; I  
‘ have refused to accept of Mr. Beecher  
‘ on your account, and will faithfully

‘ keep my promise to be yours, what-  
‘ ever be the consequence.’

‘ This is too much, madam, replied  
‘ he, but not more than I expected from  
‘ your refined sentiments. But I should  
‘ little merit so generous a heart, were I  
‘ desirous of possessing it, while it beats  
‘ for another. Excuse me, therefore,  
‘ my still beloved, still doated-on Sophia,  
‘ and permit me to enjoy the only hap-  
‘ piness that now remains for me, by  
‘ contributing at least to the promotion  
‘ of yours, with the man you love best.’

He would not trust himself with his Sophia to wait for a reply, but hastened down stairs as fast as his trembling feet could carry him, while Sophia opened her whole heart to Mrs. Romney, with a flood of tears. She acknowledged her love for Beecher, but at the same time most pathetically lamented the distress which this affair would give to Sir William, of whom she spoke in the highest terms.

Beecher,

Beecher, hearing as he went out of his apartment, in order to go down stairs, the plaintive voice of his Sophia, opened the dressing-room door, and found her sitting with her friend, who immediately repaired to Sir William, whom she found quite over-whelmed with despair. He had exerted himself so nobly before Sophia, to make her happy, that the pangs he felt for the loss of her returned with double force. She endeavoured to comfort him: he was incapable of receiving any consolation, till she told him of Sophia's kind expressions in his favour. He then roused a little from the reverie, into which the violent opposition to his inclinations had thrown him. She pressed him to go into his own room to lie down, and to try to take some rest. He seemed to be inclined to comply, went up stairs and flung himself across the bed.

When Mrs. Romney quitted his chamber, she heard him give vent to the loudest lamentations as she passed into her dressing-room, in which she

found Beecher and Sophia sitting together. The latter rose at her entrance, and said, ‘ If you knew, my dear friend, the anguish I feel at what I am going to say to you, surely you would pity me. You will, I believe, own with me, that my longer stay in this house will be improper; in this house in which I have received so many favours from two such valuable friends. But can I stay to give still more pain to a man to whom I wish nothing but the greatest pleasure, as no-body in this world deserves it more? Mr. Beecher will leave you immediately, and send my uncle for me to-morrow. This one night more I will trespass on my dear Mrs. Romney’s hospitality, who will not, I hope, give me up as a friend, though she resigns me as a relation.’

Mrs. Romney was too much affected to make her any answer. Mr. Beecher thanked that amiable lady with great politeness, for the favours he had received from her, and intreated her to  
give

give him leave ever to remember them with gratitude. ‘ One day, madam, continued he, when you can be better reconciled to me, I hope you will not deny me the pleasure of that friendship, which has been so great a happiness to my dear Sophia. Let me also intreat you, madam, to tell Sir William Acres from me, that though I am so unfortunate as to interfere between him and a lady, whose prior regard for me she is still so good as to retain, I have the most exalted sense of his excellent character, and the infinite esteem he has shewn for my beloved Miss Fanbrook; and that I would most willingly have paid my respects to him in person, were I not apprehensive of distressing him too much just at this juncture by my presence; but assure him, madam, that I shall ever reflect upon the invaluable present he has made me in my adored Sophia, with the most grateful sensations.’ His servant then coming to inform him that the post-chaise was at the door, he embraced Sophia with the warmest affection,

fection, and begging her, in the fondest accents, to take care of her health, concluded with saying, ' That he hoped he should meet her the next day at her ' uncle's,' and set off for London directly.

Sophia's heart was so full, that she could not say much to the tender adieu of her dear Beecher at his departure; and the extreme concern which she felt for Sir William (whose generous surrender of her touched her more than any thing he had done) the uncertainty how her uncle and aunt would receive Beecher, and whether her uncle would come for her, sufficiently employed her thoughts. But when she considered that Beecher was alive, that he had never been inconstant, and that no-body had a right to hinder their union, she gave up the reins to her imagination, which presented to her a more pleasing prospect of felicity than it had for a long time exhibited. In the midst of her pleasing prospects, however, when recollection brought Sir William to her view;

view; when she thought on all that he had done for her; all that he had suffered, and was suffering for her sake; her ideas became too horrid to be endured. She begged Mrs. Romney, who sat in silence by her, to use her utmost endeavours to restore her nephew to his former tranquility, and told her that the anxiety under which she still laboured upon his account, and which she should ever feel, till he had got the better of his inclination for her, would not suffer her to receive enjoyment from any thing.

Mrs. Romney made her little or no reply, and soon quitted her to look after Sir William, whom she found almost spent with grief. She told him all that Beecher and Sophia had been saying about him to her, and begged him to take some refreshment, which he for a long time refused, saying that he wished to die, as death only could put an end to his afflictions. ‘Death, said he, can alone relieve me from the tortures which I endure.’

‘ Then, replied Mrs. Romney, I must  
‘ tell Sophia that you are absolutely de-  
‘ termined to kill yourself; to acquaint  
‘ her with this resolution, will be to  
‘ make her miserable for ever. She  
‘ will then, instead of enjoying the hap-  
‘ piness you have endeavoured to give  
‘ her, languish out her life in penitential  
‘ sorrow.’

‘ Can you then, madam, cried he,  
‘ suppose that Sophia feels any concern  
‘ for me now?’

‘ I am sure she does, replied Mrs.  
‘ Romney; were you to see her present  
‘ distress, you would be so too. I am  
‘ satisfied that she has, at this moment,  
‘ the highest esteem for you, and firmly  
‘ believe, that, if she had never enter-  
‘ tained a notion of having used Beecher  
‘ ill, she would have been yours before  
‘ now. Her sighs after him have pro-  
‘ ceeded more from repentance than  
‘ love: she longed to see him more  
‘ from a desire to repair the fault which  
‘ she had, in her own opinion, commit-  
‘ ted,

‘ted, than from any violent affection  
‘for him.’

Mrs. Romney in a great measure believed all that she said to Sir William, but her chief design was to raise his spirits, and she succeeded.

‘She is, I know, said he, the loveliest,  
‘best of creatures; and if I thought  
‘that my life was in the least desirable  
‘to her, I would certainly endeavour to  
‘preserve it, whatever I suffered by so  
‘doing, rather than be the cause of one  
‘moment’s uneasiness to her. But never  
‘imagine, madam, never hope, that I  
‘can enjoy any satisfaction but in hear-  
‘ing of the felicity of this dear girl.  
‘I will not see her—I dare not—but I  
‘may hear about her. You, my dear  
‘Mrs. Romney, will see her: you will  
‘love her as tenderly as ever, and will  
‘tell me all she says—won’t you?’

‘Yes, yes, said his aunt, if you will  
‘try to get the better of your sorrow:’  
for by the wildness and fierceness of his

looks, and a sort of unnaturally assumed cheerfulness all on a sudden, accompanied with starts and hesitations, she really thought his behaviour bordered upon frenzy. She therefore rung the bell for his man, ordered him to bring his master something to take, and going into Sophia's room, begged her to send a request to him by her to take care of himself.

When Mrs. Romney entered Sophia's room, she found her sitting at a table, with a paper before her, on which she had been writing; but seemed to have been interrupted by a flood of tears, which she was endeavouring to wipe away, in order to proceed with her pen.

‘ I am writing to Sir William, madam,’ said she, with a voice scarce intelligible.

‘ I am glad you are, replied Mrs. Romney; he very much wants to be comforted by you; he will receive comfort from no other hand. With  
‘ the

‘ the greatest difficulty I have just pre-  
 ‘ vailed on him to let me send him  
 ‘ some refreshment. He has eat no-  
 ‘ thing since yesterday morning. A  
 ‘ word from you may perhaps occasion  
 ‘ an alteration in him for the better.’

‘ Tell him, my dear Mrs. Romney,  
 ‘ she answered, that I intreat him,  
 ‘ in the most earnest manner, to pre-  
 ‘ serve his health for my sake. Say  
 ‘ every thing you can think of to en-  
 ‘ force my request. I would go myself,  
 ‘ were I not afraid of hurting him still  
 ‘ more by the sight of me: but perhaps  
 ‘ I have a lucky thought; it just now  
 ‘ occurs to me. Let doctor Wise be  
 ‘ sent for, but let him come in as if he  
 ‘ called by chance. He is a man of  
 ‘ sense, as well as a good physician, and  
 ‘ has, I dare say, a great regard for Sir  
 ‘ William. Probably he may think of  
 ‘ something that may divert his re-  
 ‘ flections from so unhappy an object  
 ‘ as I have been to him, and save him.  
 ‘ Oh! madam, spare no pains; you  
 ‘ know his infinite merit. Oh! save  
 Sir

‘ Sir William ; I cannot bear to think  
‘ upon his distress. When I reflect on  
‘ his tender concern for me when I  
‘ was ill, and on the thousand various  
‘ ways he took to amuse me, to cheer  
‘ my drooping spirits, my heart bleeds  
‘ within me. I cannot bear to leave  
‘ him in this melancholy situation ; and  
‘ yet as I must leave him, the sooner I  
‘ remove myself from this affecting  
‘ place the better. My absence and  
‘ time can alone give him the relief  
‘ which he stands so much in need of.’

Mrs. Romney, without returning an answer, went directly to Sir William, and told him all that Sophia had said, except what related to the doctor, in the strongest terms. He only said with a sigh, ‘ And does she pity me ?—Ah !  
‘ —she does ; she must—I know her  
‘ gentle heart—she must feel for me.’

‘ You will then, I hope, said his  
‘ aunt, try to oblige her, by taking  
‘ care of yourself. Let me promise  
‘ her

‘ her that you will, or she can never  
‘ be at rest.’

‘ Well, replied he eagerly, I do, I do.  
‘ Tell her that I have always done  
‘ every thing she desired, or even seemed  
‘ to wish for: tell her that I ever will  
‘ while I have life.’

‘ That’s enough, said she, endeavour  
‘ then to take some rest.’ He promised he would, and she left him to write a note to doctor Wise, according to Sophia’s advice, of which she very much approved.

The day was now far advanced; neither Sophia nor Sir William had yet taken much refreshment. Mrs. Romney had more than once looked in upon the former for that purpose, but she was busied in writing, and making up a packet, which she finished before the evening. The last time Mrs. Romney went to her, to insist upon her drinking some tea, she put the packet into her hand. ‘ There, my dear friend, said  
6 ‘ she,

‘ she, give this to Sir William, as soon  
‘ as I am gone; and now promise to  
‘ forgive me all the trouble I have oc-  
‘ casioned; though if I have your for-  
‘ giveness, I shall never have my own.’

As she spoke the latter part of her speech in a most pathetic manner, Mrs. Romney could not refrain from tears.  
‘ Be assured, said she, my dear Sophia,  
‘ that I cannot help loving you, and  
‘ grieving for the loss of you. I can-  
‘ not be easy at parting with so amiable  
‘ a companion.’

‘ You will not, must not lose me,  
‘ cried she; I cannot support the bare  
‘ idea of that. No, my dearest friend,  
‘ when Sir William is reconciled a little  
‘ to my absence, make use of every  
‘ argument in your power to persuade  
‘ him to look out for a more agreeable,  
‘ a more deserving woman than myself,  
‘ who, being quite free from any at-  
‘ tachment, may give herself up entire-  
‘ ly to him, and make him completely  
‘ happy. Then I may, I hope, some-  
‘ times

‘ times enjoy my dear Mrs. Romney’s  
‘ company.’

‘ It will be so long, my dear, said  
‘ the good Mrs. Romney, before that  
‘ time happens, if it ever happens,  
‘ that you will have almost forgot  
‘ me.’

‘ Forgot you, madam! cried Sophia,  
‘ you surely do not think me capable  
‘ of forgetting a dear friend, for whom  
‘ I have so perfect an esteem, so sincere  
‘ an affection? No, my amiable Mrs.  
‘ Romney, you have been much more  
‘ than a mother to me; and I shall ever  
‘ love you with a filial regard; though  
‘ I see, see with the deepest concern,  
‘ that my leaving Sir William has not a  
‘ little lowered me in your esteem. I  
‘ wonder not at it indeed, continued  
‘ she, after a short pause: I even con-  
‘ demn myself. But circumstanced and  
‘ distressed as I am at present, how can  
‘ I act otherwise? Were you, madam,  
‘ sensible of what I endure, I am wil-  
‘ ling to believe that the anguish of my  
‘ suffer-

‘ sufferings would excite the tenderest  
‘ compassion.’

A flood of tears followed the concluding words of Sophia’s speech. Mrs. Romney accompanied them with her’s; but exerting all her fortitude, tried to suppress them, and earnestly intreated her to drink her tea. She attempted to swallow it, but not a drop would go down.

Mrs. Romney was so melted at her griefs, and so affected at her not being able to receive any kind of sustenance, that she promised always to love her; to write to her; and to see her as often as she could seize an opportunity. ‘ If I  
‘ had been displeased with you, continued she, as I really am not. I believe  
‘ you have been sufficiently concerned  
‘ for the uneasiness of which you have  
‘ been the innocent cause. But it cannot last long; and you are far too dear  
‘ to me not to be forgiven.’

These

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These friendly expressions somewhat restored Sophia to tranquillity. She passed that night with more composure of mind than she had enjoyed the preceding one. As for Sir William, he scarce uttered a word, and then only to enquire after her health; but the restlessness of his whole person plainly discovered the perturbation of his distracted mind.

Sophia prepared, on the next morning, to go to town; and having returned all the presents which she had received from Sir William, even her favourite bird, into the hands of Mrs. Romney, begged her to deliver them to him after her departure. ‘I would willingly, my dear friend, said she, keep your picture, but I don’t know whether I ought to take so great a liberty. As to my poor little paroquet, I dare not keep him; though the fond thing appears loth to leave me; he will but too much remind me of the person from whom I received him. Give him back, therefore,

‘ fore, to Sir William, who will, I  
‘ know, take care of him for my sake.’

Mrs. Romney promised to comply with all her desires, and then went to her nephew, whom she found far from well. ‘ How does Miss Fanbrook, madam?’ said he (rising with much ado at her approach) with a heavy sigh; ‘ does she leave you to day?’ ‘ I suppose so,’ replied she, repeating all that had passed between them.

‘ How amiably, said he, does she conduct herself in every situation? How engaging she is? What a charm is there in every thing she says and does? But let her not think, madam, that I will ever hear of any other woman—What, after her?—Heavens! can she imagine me capable of entertaining such a thought?—No—do not flatter yourself with such a notion. That request is the only one I can now refuse her. But you must still love her, my dear aunt, you must see her now and then, though I dare not. But bring  
‘ her

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‘ her little bird to me ; let me make up  
‘ the loss of his kind mistress to him,  
‘ and tell her that I will caress him, as  
‘ she desires, for her dear sake.’

All these sentences were brought out by degrees, slowly, and with frequent interruptions, for he was not able to deliver them at once. He stopped at the close of them for a considerable while, and then went on again——

‘ I know her delicacy about your  
‘ picture, madam, yet there cannot surely  
‘ be any impropriety in keeping it,  
‘ though it was a gift of mine, as it is  
‘ a strong likeness, and was copied from  
‘ the bracelet on purpose for her pocket.  
‘ Let me intreat her to accept of that.’

Here a servant came in, and told Mrs. Romney that Mr. Besfield was below, and that Miss Fanbrook begged the favour of her company for a moment.

‘ Go, my dear aunt, said Sir William,  
‘ make haste, let no request of her’s be  
‘ uncom-

‘ uncomplained with: but I cannot see  
‘ him; tell him I adore Sophia—No—  
‘ stay, madam, don’t say any thing of  
‘ it; perhaps he may chide the sweet  
‘ girl: tell him only that I wish her  
‘ all happiness; but don’t let me see  
‘ him, I am very unfit for company.’

Mrs. Romney went down to Mr. Besfield, who approached her with a very serious countenance. ‘ I am under the  
‘ greatest concern imaginable, madam,  
‘ said he, at what has happened; and  
‘ doubly concerned that I should have  
‘ been, though most innocently, the  
‘ cause of it. I was, indeed, myself  
‘ entirely deceived, in regard to Mr.  
‘ Beecher, and I find this poor girl cannot conquer her first inclination for  
‘ him. I pity Sir William from my  
‘ heart, and though I believe Mr.  
‘ Beecher to be a worthy young man,  
‘ and know him to be an agreeable one,  
‘ I cannot help seeing the difference  
‘ plain enough to prefer Sir William.  
‘ But we cannot make young people  
‘ see with our eyes.’

Mrs.

Mrs. Romney interrupted him here to excuse her young friend, and to plead a little in her behalf, as she perceived that he was dissatisfied with her conduct. He renewed his conversation in praise of Sir William; in the middle of which Sophia, fearful of her uncle's anger, came down trembling, with her hat on, ready to attend him; chusing to come while Mrs. Romney was present, because she hoped that before her, he would not give a loose to his resentment. She judged right. Mr. Besfield, beginning to express his dissatisfaction, Mrs. Romney saw her increasing confusion, and said, ' I beg, Sir, that you would  
' consider a little before you condemn;  
' people cannot always dispose of their  
' hearts to please their relations. Mr.  
' Beecher is a very deserving man; you  
' approved of him: Miss Fanbrook  
' knew his worth long before she be-  
' came acquainted with Sir William,  
' whose affliction at parting with her  
' would receive a very great addition  
' indeed, if he only imagined that her  
' conduct, of which he has so high an  
' opinion,

‘ opinion, did not meet with the appro-  
‘ bation of her relations.’

‘ Oh! say no more, my dear, dear  
‘ Mrs. Romney, said Sophia, I cannot  
‘ leave you as I ought to do—I cannot  
‘ go.’ She sat down, and burst into  
tears. ‘ Your kindness distresses—it  
‘ distracts me. Yet the sooner this  
‘ struggle is over the better.’ She rose  
again, and hanging round Mrs. Rom-  
ney’s neck, which she watered with  
her tears, ‘ Farewel, my dearest  
‘ friend, said she, only for the present;  
‘ give me leave to write to you. Tell  
‘ Sir William every thing you can to  
‘ comfort him.’ Here her voice failed  
her; she ran to the door, and stepping  
into the chaise, with one hand hid her  
streaming eyes with her handkerchief,  
while she waved its snowy partner out  
at the window, to bid adieu to Mrs.  
Romney, who stood weeping, and mourn-  
fully returned it.

Sir William, though he was not in a  
condition to bear the shock of such a  
farewel,

farewell, was, by an irresistible impulse, carried to the window, from whence he saw her in the chaise, in the above described attitude. The agonies which so affecting a sight occasioned, were altogether severe and insupportable. He threw himself again across the bed, frantic with despair.

In this frantic, this despairing situation, Mrs. Romney found him, when she went up stairs with the things Sophia had left for him, and the paroquet which she desired might be given to him, as soon as she was gone. He rose at her entrance, but scarce seemed to see or to hear her, till she held out Sophia's packet to him. He snatched it from her eagerly, and with as much eagerness broke the seals. It contained the parchment which he had formerly given to her, wherein his will was written, and the following lines :

‘ If a mind so exalted as that of Sir  
 ‘ William Acres could be sensible of  
 ‘ its own value, he would then have  
 VOL. II. L. ‘ some

‘ some idea of the unutterable pain it  
‘ gives me to accept of a resignation  
‘ made solely with a view to my hap-  
‘ piness. But that happiness can never  
‘ be complete, while the person so cruel-  
‘ ly suffers, who so kindly endeavoured  
‘ to promote it. It is, however, still in  
‘ your power, Sir, to remove the un-  
‘ easiness under which I labour, by tak-  
‘ ing care of a life which will be always  
‘ deemed by me of too much value to  
‘ be neglected; and add to the innu-  
‘ merable favours which you have con-  
‘ ferred on me, by not depriving me of  
‘ your friendship, which as it was my  
‘ pride to gain it, will ever be my plea-  
‘ sure to preserve.

‘ Before I attempt to thank you, Sir,  
‘ for your generous intentions contained  
‘ in the enclosed parchment, I must beg  
‘ leave to return it, with your other  
‘ favours; and at the same time to assure  
‘ you, that nothing will give me a more  
‘ sincere delight than the news of your  
‘ restored tranquility. I must intreat  
‘ you not to send an answer to this let-  
‘ ter.

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‘ter. It will be too affecting for me  
‘to receive any more proofs of your re-  
‘gard, as I am now utterly unable to  
‘make acknowledgments equal to your  
‘merit.

‘That you may enjoy uninterrupted  
‘health, unchangeable happiness, and  
‘every blessing which heaven can be-  
‘stow, will ever be the sincere wish,  
‘and fervent prayer, of the but too  
‘much obliged

SOPHIA FANBROOK.’

This letter was indeed a severe stroke to poor Sir William, who had never received even a line from his Sophia before; and though she in general wrote a very tolerable hand, it was so blotted, and had been so blurred with her tears, which had evidently fallen copiously upon her paper, that no-body but a lover could have decyphered it. Sir William, in spite of its illegibility, was in raptures, however, at every sentence, and kissed it with such ardor and vio-

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lence,

lence, that he almost tore it to tatters, before he got half way through it. When she desired him to preserve his life, he looked as if he was risen from the dead ; and when she begged a continuation of his friendship: ‘ My friendship ! O G-d, cried he, of what use can my friendship be to her now ?—Yet if she requests it—Sophia—too, too lovely Sophia—Yes, yes, you have, you have all that remains of me. I have now nothing which I can call my own ; and to what purpose is it to return the parchment ? No, Sophia, ’tis of no use in the world to me ; I have no use for money ; all that I wanted it for, was to adorn, to please, to gratify, to indulge my Sophia : now she is gone, every blessing upon earth is flown with her. O madam, madam, continued he, looking at Mrs. Romney with tearful eyes, what an angel have I lost ?’ Then taking up the parchment again, ‘ But I will preserve this for her sake—Who knows—strange unaccountable changes of fortune happen to people ; and this dear girl, even

‘ even my Sophia, may one day find  
 ‘ this of service to her—lay it by for  
 ‘ her, my dear aunt.’ He then pro-  
 ceeded with the letter. ‘ I must not  
 ‘ answer it, she says; my answer will  
 ‘ affect her too much. Well!—be it  
 ‘ so—I could not write now if I would.  
 ‘ My head is too confused. You shall  
 ‘ write for me—won’t you, madam?  
 ‘ I am not capable of writing, and I  
 ‘ could not add to her uneasiness. I see  
 ‘ she still pities me—Amiable Sophia!  
 ‘ how extravagantly I doat on thee?  
 ‘ still doat on thee? I cannot help it.  
 ‘ See, madam, see, pointing to the con-  
 clusion of her letter, she says she will  
 ‘ pray for me; she does pray for me:  
 ‘ gracious heaven! hear her. I never  
 ‘ wanted prayers more, and her’s, so fer-  
 ‘ vent, so sincere, must doubtless avail.’

It is impossible to say how long Sir William would have animadverted on every part of the above letter, as dear to him as the writer of it, had not Dr. Wise, as if by mere accident, entered his chamber. He seemed to be dis-

concerted at being so surprised, and looked at Mrs. Romney as if he thought she had schemed the doctor's visit to him.

‘ Miss Fanbrook, Sir William, said she, desired that Dr. Wise would visit you as a friend; you will not, I hope, object to that?’

‘ No, madam, he replied, I can never object to any thing which Miss Fanbrook desires. It is to please her alone that I consent to preserve a wretched being; a being that will never afford me any comfort, now I am deprived of her.’

While doctor Wise (who had a real regard for Sir William, totally detached from the favours which he had so lately received from him with such profusion, for the care he had taken of his beloved Sophia) and Mrs. Romney endeavoured to bring Sir William into a happier frame of mind, poor Sophia herself was in a very unpleasurable situation; and  
her

her uncle's behaviour to her did not contribute to render it agreeable. Mr. Besfield, though a very good sort of a man, was not young; his days of love had long been over; he could not therefore feel properly for his niece on this occasion. Besides, though he had been formerly very much pleased with Mr. Beecher, and who now received him, on his unexpected arrival, as well as his surprize at the sight of him gave him leave; yet, whether it was owing to Sir William's handsome offer to him when he met with misfortunes, or to his unbounded liberality to Sophia, or to something personally attractive in his air and manner, he certainly was greatly prepossessed in his favour.

Some, perhaps many, people will be inclined to think, that the rank and fortune to which Sir William would have raised his niece, were the strongest motives by which Mr. Besfield was urged to prefer him to Mr. Beecher. It is natural to suppose that such motives biassed him, but they did not. Mr. Bes-

field was a worthy man; he was not an ambitious one. Sir William, he thought, setting aside all his worldly advantages, and his superiority on their account to Beecher, deserved Sophia from his great and uncommon affection for her. Not so thought Mrs. Besfield; she looked upon a marriage of splendor and affluence as the most desirable one, and was therefore not a little disappointed and chagrined to see her niece so simple as to resist the opportunity of being lady Acres. She was, however, civil to Mr. Beecher; and as women in general have more curiosity than men, she expressed an inclination to know how there came to be that strange mistake about his marriage and his death abroad; and also discovered some small desire to be informed (if he could inform her) why Sophia had refused him before.

Mr. Beecher very readily gratified her curiosity, as far as it lay in his power, with regard to himself, by saying, ‘ That  
‘ he supposed the mistakes might have  
‘ arisen from a similitude of names and  
‘ counties;

‘ counties ; mistakes, he added, which  
 ‘ had proved so fatal to him, in depriv-  
 ‘ ing him of the only woman he had  
 ‘ ever loved.’ But he did not care to  
 answer her last quære, because he did not  
 know whether his dear Sophy would  
 approve of it. From her aunt’s igno-  
 rance of her motives, he concluded, that  
 she was not willing to reveal them. He  
 kept clear of that subject therefore,  
 with all his address, and only told Mrs.  
 Besfield that her refusal proceeded from  
 a point of delicacy. In telling her so,  
 he really spoke the truth ; for though a  
 mere girlish fondness for show first urged  
 Sophia to reject her lover, she afterwards  
 blamed herself so much for such weak-  
 ness of mind, that she actually thought  
 she was not worthy of him : and when,  
 on being seized by the small-pox, she  
 imagined that her person would become  
 disgusting to him, the reflections on her  
 past behaviour served to make her think  
 herself still more undeserving of his love.  
 Yet so sincere was her contrition for  
 the faults which she, in her own opinion,  
 had committed, that on finding she had

received very little injury to her person from her illness, she would have gladly accepted of Beecher, whom she had ever loved, if he ever fell in her way again.

Sophia was so excessively moved at parting with Mrs. Romney, and indeed at leaving Sir William in so unhappy a situation, that she could not conceal her uneasiness : and when her uncle asked her the cause of her immoderate sorrow, at a time when she was going to be governed entirely by her own inclination ; she sighed, she wept, but she wanted words to express what she felt.

When Beecher, on her arrival, ran to the door, to take her out of the chaise, the strong marks of melancholy and dejection in her face, gave him a great deal of concern : and as Mrs. Besfield did not receive her with the cordiality she might, he thought, have expected from an aunt who had brought her up ; his compassion and his tenderness for her were consider-

considerably increased. He led her into the parlour, said all he could think of to dissipate the gloomy ideas which had clouded her countenance, and which Mrs. Besfield's behaviour was not calculated to remove.

‘ Indeed, Sophy, said her aunt, observing the assiduity of Beecher to make her chearful, if I was your lover, I should not think the affliction which you discover at leaving Sir William, any proof of your regard for me.’

This speech, rather of the satirical kind, as it increased Sophia's distress, hurt Mr. Beecher extremely. ‘ I should have a very indifferent opinion, madam, said he briskly, of Miss Fanbrook's sensibility, if she bore the separation from so amiable a man as Sir William is generally allowed to be; a man who has shewn evidently so tender and so disinterested a regard for her, without being very much affected by the melancholy condition in  
L 6 which

‘ which she left him on her account:  
‘ and so far from being displeased with  
‘ these genuine signs of sensibility, I  
‘ must confess I observe them with satisfaction, provided they do not injure  
‘ her health. The concern she shows  
‘ upon this occasion, is a certain proof  
‘ to me of the sweetness of her disposition, and of the goodness of her heart.  
‘ But be comforted now, my dearest love,  
‘ continued he, embracing his Sophia  
‘ fondly, and let me try to sooth your  
‘ sorrows, and worthily supply the place  
‘ of the valuable man whom you have  
‘ quitted for me.’

Sophia, cheared by her lover’s speech in her behalf, and melted by his endearments, looked at him with the eyes of satisfaction, and said to her aunt, ‘ Tho’  
‘ I should think myself, madam, totally  
‘ unworthy of the great esteem Sir  
‘ William has expressed for me, if I  
‘ could leave him without emotion, yet  
‘ I hope you will impute no small part  
‘ of my affliction to my being separated  
‘ from my dear Mrs. Romney, who  
treated

‘ treated me more like a near relation,  
‘ than like a common acquaintance, or  
‘ even a friend.’

As Sophia could not without sensibly feeling the difference between them, reflect on the cool civility of Mrs. Besfield, and the friendly behaviour of Mrs. Romney, she, with great difficulty, refrained from tears, which were just ready again to start; but the fear of giving her dear Beecher any reason to imagine that she felt no pleasure in going to be united to him, made her use her utmost efforts to compose her fluttered spirits, and return his love: and indeed, his vindication of her to her aunt had very much increased her affection for him.

Before the day was over, Mr. and Mrs. Besfield began to be more reconciled to the step which their niece had taken: her many obliging ways, her tender, yet delicate manner of receiving and returning her lover's most affectionate attentions, induced them to confess to each other,  
when

when they were left by themselves, that she was a very agreeable girl, and much improved since she had been at Windsor. The truth is, she had been, during her stay there, so accustomed to watch over herself, and to regulate her conduct with the nicest exactness, that she appeared in a new light to her friends in town.

Beecher, who saw new charms in her every moment, had now leisure to examine, and to admire them; and his admiration of them rendered him still more eager to make her his own. He exhausted all his rhetoric to prevail on her to accelerate their marriage.

As most of her things were ready, she had little more to do, than to select those which were the plainest and the properest for the station of life in which Beecher appeared, who sent his servant down to order his house at Rose-Hill to be prepared, without delay, for their reception, as he was determined not to leave his Sophy again, if his affairs made  
his

his absence from her ever so necessary. The writings had been drawn before she refused him, and a very slight addition was necessary to make them perfectly proper.

As Beecher's father, though of a genteel family, had arrived to the possession of his estate by the death of an elder brother, who dying married without heirs, there were neither jewels nor toys remaining for presents to Sophia; he had nothing but his heart to bestow, which, almost from the first time of his seeing her, had been unalterably her's, and which became more entirely so every hour.

At the approach of the day intended for their union, Beecher expressed the most lively joy; and Sophia, now quite contented with her lot, discovered, by a thousand little innocent caresses, the pleasure which she felt at receiving every day additional marks of his affection. That pleasure was only disturbed when memory brought Sir William to her view;

view; when she happened to be alone, the recollection of past scenes, in which he had so great a share, pained her so much, that she could only dissipate the gloomy ideas which always rose in her mind in the moments of self-inspection, by flying from her own thoughts.

Juliet, who was really glad to see her cousin, and who thought she herself had quite got the better of her inclination for Sir William, could not help feeling great concern, when his sufferings on Sophy's account afforded matter one day accidentally for conversation in the family; though she endeavoured to conceal her sensations from her friends, and even from Sophia, so much had she profited by Mrs. Besfield's discreet advice.

A day or two before her marriage, Sophia wrote a long and very affecting letter to her dear Mrs. Romney, in which she expressed great disquietude and esteem for Sir William, but mentioned

not a word concerning herself, or her affairs.

As for Sir William, he had been in a deplorable way ever since her departure, sometimes almost raving about her, sometimes more rational. But, except she was the subject of his conversation, he never uttered a word. If he was checked by his aunt, as she frequently opposed him out of kindness, thinking, very justly, that he would increase his disorder, by dwelling upon the cause of it, he absolutely refused to speak at all. Poor Mrs. Romney, therefore, was obliged to humour him. She never left him but now and then to take a little rest, for she had sat up with him every night since Sophia left him. He made no objection to this, but seemed scarce sensible of the difference between night and day. He liked to have his aunt always near him, because he could talk freely to her about Sophia; and he suffered Dr. Wise to visit him, because she had desired it.

The

The doctor, whom Mrs. Romney consulted privately, told her that there was nothing to be done, but by the same methods which had been taken with Miss Fanbrook ; air and exercise, with varied amusements, to divert the attention if possible to other objects. But here Sir William's good friend and physician found a considerable check to his salutary prescriptions, for he refused to go out of his room for some time ; so far was he from being disposed to leave the house ; and confined his aunt with him during the hottest part of the year, though she was almost suffocated with her imprisonment.

In a day or two after the departure of Sophia, Sir William grew very unquiet. While he was expressing his anxiety at not hearing any news of her, her letter was delivered to Mrs. Romney, who, knowing the eagerness of his disposition, hurried over its contents, and only first saying, ' It comes from my ' dear Sophia,'——

• Make

‘ Make haste, my dear madam, said  
‘ he trembling with impatience, if you  
‘ have the least regard for me. Tell  
‘ me if the sweet girl is well, and if she  
‘ is—Oh! how can I pronounce a word  
‘ so fatal to my peace!—married?’

‘ No, Sir William, said his aunt,  
‘ I suppose not, for she signs herself  
‘ Fanbrook; here, take it, read it.’

‘ Give it me, give it me, replied he,  
‘ snatching it hastily from her; what a  
‘ pretty hand she writes?’

Upon reading those passages wherein  
she made a favourable mention of him,  
and expressed her uneasiness on his ac-  
count, wishing to hear of his welfare,  
he cried in a kind of rapture, ‘ O, thou  
‘ sweet angel, am I then still, still re-  
‘ membered by my dear Sophia? I will  
‘ endeavour to get well, madam; per-  
‘ haps I may yet live to be of service to  
‘ this lovely creature. What a charm-  
‘ ing girl she is? See, in this long  
‘ letter she has not said a single word  
concern-

‘ concerning Beecher. What delicacy !  
‘ She knew that I should read it ; and  
‘ she knew what I should necessarily  
‘ feel. I may love her, madam ? May—  
‘ I must. As long as I don’t attempt to  
‘ see her, nor to write to her, I must  
‘ adore her. But will you not answer  
‘ this letter ? Do, my dear aunt, direct-  
‘ ly ; desire her to write often. Her  
‘ style is as pleasing, as elegant, as her  
‘ person. It is something particular, my  
‘ dear Mrs. Romney, that I should never  
‘ receive a letter, not even a note, from  
‘ that dear hand, till all my fond hopes  
‘ were at an end. But come, write, I  
‘ must see what you say to her.’

Mrs Romney wanted no inducement to answer Sophia’s letter, with which she was very much pleased ; but tho’ her answer was full of the kindest and most affectionate expressions, Sir William was dissatisfied ; he found fault with it ; it was not, he said, half so kind, half so affectionate as it should have been.  
‘ By this letter, continued he, Sophia  
‘ will think you are changed ; besides,  
‘ you

‘ you have not been sufficiently particular about me. She still wishes to hear about me, and I dare believe, from the knowledge I have of the goodness of her heart, that she would be glad to hear of my happiness.’

‘ Well then, said Mrs. Romney, try to make yourself happy.’

‘ That is impossible, my dear aunt, replied he, without her: now she is gone, I never can be happy. But I will go down, her dear picture is in the parlour. I will feast my eyes on that, while I read her letter again, and then I shall fancy that I see her, that I hear her.

He was at the bottom of the stairs in a moment, before Mrs. Romney could make a reply, having taken with him the letter, while she was in the middle of her answer to it. In vain did she tell him that she could not do without it. He desired her to follow him with the paper.

The

The first thing which struck his eye when he entered the parlour, was a little view of a favourite walk in the park at Mount Acres, which she had taken with her pencil, and which had been framed by his order, and hung up there. This very forcibly struck him. ‘There,’ cried he, is another convincing proof of the excellence of her genius. How came I to forget it? How came I to let it be so long below? I will have it in my own room, madam.’

Mrs. Romney, who opposed him in nothing, agreed at once to his desires, and once more sat down to write.

After having gazed for some time upon the picture of Sophia, as if his whole soul was centered in it, Sir William turned on a sudden towards Mrs. Romney, and said, ‘I have a new thought; it is just come into my head, and I will immediately put my scheme into execution. Let John go directly and fetch Meyers. I will have a miniature painted from this portrait; I shall then have

‘ have the image of my dear Sophia  
‘ with me wherever I go.’

‘ Nay, now, my dear Sir William,’  
replied Mrs. Romney, who did not ap-  
prove of this scheme, as she thought  
that the miniature of Sophia would only  
serve to make him dwell on ideas which  
he should rather endeavour to drive  
from his mind: ‘ Now I think you are  
‘ a little out of the way; the picture of  
‘ the woman whom you ought to for-  
‘ get, always before your eyes, will but  
‘ disturb your repose, and increase your  
‘ uneasiness.’

‘ Oh, madam, said he, talk not of  
‘ repose; I wish not for repose; that is  
‘ only reserved for hearts at ease;  
‘ mine is ever on the rack.’

‘ You will be more at ease, my dear  
‘ Sir William, replied she, when you  
‘ have got the better of your passion for  
‘ Sophia, which you indeed ought not  
‘ now to encourage.’

‘ Get

‘ Get the better of it ! cried he warmly ; do you imagine I have ever formed a desire not to love her ? If you do, you are very much mistaken. As to encouraging my passion, I see nothing criminal in the indulgence of the dear delight ; the only joy that is now left for me. I see no harm in looking at her picture, and in talking of her. Make no objections, madam, continued he (perceiving Mrs. Romney’s eyes fixed upon him) I must have the picture. Her dear image is graven on my heart too deeply to be removed. You must therefore gratify my wishes.’

In consequence of this resolute speech, John was immediately dispatched to town for the painter, who came the next day. Sir William gave his directions in so wild a manner to him, that if he had not been previously acquainted with his situation, he would have certainly suspected the soundness of his intellects.

END of the SECOND VOLUME.



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